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MARTYRS

TO

CIRCUMSTANCE

HON. MRS YELVERTON.

LONDON
R. BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON ST.

600071602M

MARTYRS TO CIRCUMSTANCE.

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TO

CIRCUMSTANCE.

BY THE

HONOURABLE MRS. YELVERTON.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1861.

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250. c. 84.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

MARTYRS TO CIRCUMSTANCE.

CHAPTER I.

My husband was serving with his regiment in the Crimea. I, like many other wives, resolved to endure the miseries of a Stamboul residence, in consideration of the painful satisfaction thus afforded me of being near the scene of action, in case of accident or sickness.

Another powerful reason was, that I should obtain my letters from him a few days earlier than when in Malta; a reason which only those who have lived for months

in hope and fear of the next mail's arrival, can appreciate.

With many soft words and much hard coin, I succeeded in getting myself lodged under the protection of the Sisters of the Propaganda, in a room resembling a bird-cage, lined with glass, and which was hung out or projected from the main building, called the Maison Mère. To convey any notion of this place to an European reader is almost impossible. It was a large, dismal, mysterious, tumble-down, and dirty structure; rambling in and out of three or four of the filthiest lanes of Galata. There was not a cheerful or bright spot in the whole establishment, except the roof, which could not be deprived, like the rest of the building, of sun and air. The rooms were large and gloomy; the windows doubly guarded by the Turkish harem grating and monastic iron stanchions. There was a perfect maze of narrow, dark passages, running in every direction not only to, but

round, these apartments; intersecting each other, as though short cuts from one room to another had been the design of the architect, or more probably, of the inhabitants.

Somewhere in the midst of this was a church, which must have been excavated out of the rooms and passages; as there was no external evidence of its existence that I could ever discover; and the bell hung outside the *Pharmacie* window.

The *Pharmacie* was a bonâ fide druggist's shop, where medicines, pills, and plasters were compounded for the use of the hospital. Three or four passages led to a range of kitchens, whence issued a perpetual odour of *bouillon* and jam for the convalescents in the hospital; to workrooms, with eternal sheet-making; to storerooms, where the walls were lined with chocolate (without which a Frenchman is not supposed to recover from sickness) and other dry condiments; to wash rooms, &c., and the hospital. Such was the Maison

Mère. The only entrance which one might venture to call such was almost blocked up and eclipsed by a large building opposite, whose overhanging roof and projecting windows came nearly in contact with the crumbling, ornamental, stone-work of the great gateway. Massive wooden doors studded with nails, and opening down the middle, were usually kept fast with iron bars; and a hole, resembling the entrance to a large dog-kennel, was the ordinary mode of ingress. Inside lay a large Stamboul dog, which, for his ugliness and his guardianship of the gate, I christened Cerberus. Beyond was a small court-yard and the lodge of the portress, a little dark room. The portress was a miniature Cyclops, having one furious eye, which appeared anxious to occupy the centre of her face. Between her and Cerberus constant war existed, and a mutual exchange of growls and snarls was kept up. I never could count the number of languages she spoke, but con-

cluded that she had the gift of tongues, and the facility for scolding in any.

There were several other narrow doors, less dangerous to enter, and more humble, which hid themselves round corners or up narrow dark passages, and were undefended.

What I have described in a page, took me months to discover; for although I was admitted and sheltered in the cage, I was not considered as an inmate of the rest of the building, over which a conventual mystery brooded. But the narrow lobbies excited my curiosity from the first; and though feeling that I committed a breach of etiquette in wandering into latitudes where I had obviously no business, having nothing else to do I made frequent explorations into the ghostly regions; and whether it was the effect of a guilty conscience or not, I often fancied I heard piteous moans through the walls of rooms, the entrance to which I could not even surmise. Be

this as it may, certain it is that my olfactory nerves did not deceive me, for a most unmistakable and sickening effluvium pervaded many of the passages.

I was wandering about one afternoon in these localities, when I dimly saw in the distance two white objects approaching, which I recognised as the white cornette of the *Sœurs*. They advanced slowly, bearing something which appeared heavy, and took up the whole width of the passage. Not wishing to be discovered I drew close to the wall, where fortunately there was a small alcove, or niche, similar to what I had observed in several other places, and had pondered frequently as to their probable use, whether they were intended to contain the dead body of a dried saint, or to receive the living one of a refractory novice, as history relates of olden times; but whatever the original design was, one now served me as a place of concealment.

As the *Sœurs* came noiselessly on with

their burden, my eyes were riveted upon it, and a feeling of awe crept over me. Every line of the object began to stand out with fearful angularity. I was speechless with horror—there could be no mistake—they bore between them a corpse in a winding-sheet: not even the rustle of their dress disturbed the deathlike silence, as these phantom-like corpse-bearers passed by. I held my breath with a choking sensation in my throat, and a trembling over my whole frame, and thought 'Let the dead bury their dead.' Had there been any one to administer sal volatile and salts I should undoubtedly have fainted; but alone in that haunted passage, with the tainted atmosphere of death around me, I thought better of it, and stole quietly back to my own bird-cage, to think over my evening's adventure.

I have already mentioned that the Maison Mère was a heterogeneous compound of church, monastery, *pharmacie*, hospital,

storehouse, &c., &c., where every kind of business was carried on, where almost every language under the sun was spoken; but I had yet to discover that it was also a cemetery, and contained vaults for the dead as well as tombs for some of the living.

The terrace or roof of this vast building was the only really pleasant place in the house. This may appear an Irishism; but the Eastern terrace conveys to the mind the idea of being in the house. It is there that the family assemble, and frequently take their meals: there the master of the harem enjoys his chibouk, blissfully raised above all the care, noise, and turmoil of the busy world below, 'o'er all the ills of life victorious.' If this were true of Tam o' Shanter, it is equally so of the Turk, seated on downy cushions, with the cool breeze from the Black Sea playing around the white folds of his turban, or now more frequently wafting the long blue silk tassel

of the fez—the nargali to his lips and the small cup of coffee at hand: a state of complete enjoyment unknown to the rest of Europe, with the exception of Tam o' Shanters in general, for whose blissfulness, however, I am not prepared to answer. There is also this difference between the Turk and Tam: that whereas one is given to see warlocks in haunted kirks, the other sees houris in gardens of Eden, and no advice from gudewife Kate *in futuro*; but finds in his harem his spouse or sposi, as the case may be, in an equally celestial frame of mind from the same cause, viz., coffee, cushion and chibouk, served on the feminine terrace, every Turkish house being divided into two halves, masculine and feminine.

To return from this digression to the terrace of the Maison de la Mère, which was a feminine terrace, par excellence, as it was never profamed by male feet, with one exception, that I am aware of. It com-

manded a magnificent view of the Golden Horn, truly so named from the liquid golden light which tinges with gorgeous beauty the otherwise unsightly objects. In the East every object is viewed through a hot, glowing atmosphere, and is naturally *couleur de rose*. We have scenes in England more lovely by far, could they be seen through the golden light of the East, instead of the cold grey atmosphere of Britain.

Where is the intrinsic beauty of the much-extolled Nile? Its mud when brought to England bears a strong resemblance to Thames mud, yet who would dream of spending a winter on a barge in the Thames? This flood of golden light is the only charm of the horn-shaped piece of water so designated. To the left sleeps the blue Bosphorus, winding with graceful curve round the base of the shadowy mountains, opposite the dark cypress grove of Scutari, sheltering the seven miles of tombstones of

departed Moslems. On the right rise the gilded domes and slender white minarets of the mosques of Stamboul, and the picturesque buildings of the old Seraglio, the beauty of which remains, although its romance is fled. It is now tenanted only by the Sultan's old cast-off wives, who are immured there, but was erst the scene of many a tragic tale of uncontrolled passion, where man 'played such pranks before high heaven as made the angels weep.'

If ever angel tears fell on human abode, it surely was the old Seraglio, where the voluptuous splendour of the state apartments so painfully contrasted with its loathsome dungeons and subterranean vaults, into which the victims were thrust, all egress being prevented by massive stones, and air and food admitted through a double row of iron bars. All this tells a tale of power and slavery; of hatred and revenge; of crime and remorse; of helpless weakness; of ambition and avarice; of tyranny and devotion; of

love and jealousy,—which is enough to make 'angels start from bliss and give a groan.'

The Sultan, it is said, unable to endure this phantom-haunted palace, abandoned the picturesque but blood-stained pile for a wooden habitation on the Bosphorus. He could not, were all true which is reported, I suppose, bear to see, stalking under that golden dome, the headless ghost of his murdered brother, whose brutal decapitation gave fancied security to his throne, nor would his imagination allow him to rest in peace where his once-favoured grand vizier had died a raving maniac, starved to death; where lay the skeleton forms of the twin children doomed for their sex masculine to that bottomless well which feeds the sparkling fountain, and the wraith of his sister, their anguished mother, with the dark crimson mark round her throat, and eyes starting from their sockets seeking her lost babes. The gentle rippling of the waves on the marble steps of the palace echoed in

his mind the gurgling smothered shriek of some houri-like Circassian, her long fair tresses glistening like sunbeams on the water, or of some dark-eyed syren, looking up reproachfully as the waves of death closed over them.

Underneath the most magnificent of the golden domes, deep down near the water's edge, was a small aperture or doorway; but door there was none, nor ever had been, nothing to shut out, as none ever returned who went that way, like a similar doorway beneath the Bridge of Sighs at Venice. They passed out—but to this world they came not back again; life and hope stood on the threshold, and there took their leave.

In Venice the victims were the noble, undaunted spirits, the lovers of truth, upholders of justice and freedom, the politician, the theologian and philosopher, great and powerful minds, who gazed with unblanched cheek and steady eye on the dark canal, and met their doom from the terrible In-

quisition, the sentence of the Black Chamber; but at the Water Gate (Capou Hadgi, as it is called) of the Seraglio appeared dragged along in a sack or by the hair of the head, struggling in the arms of the merciless black slaves, all that was loveliest in creation, a Circassian woman, whose short sojourn in her regal home had been to her a paradise of bliss, who was torn from her luxurious nest of damask cushions, from the contemplation of her own lovely self in reflected mirrors and the jewelled splendour of all around, from the flatteries of her fifty slaves, from the cherished sounds of her barbarous music, from the graceful undulations of her dancing girls, from the picturesque beauties of all within and without, so congenial to her mind, and from the arms of him she had loved with all the strength of her young heart and the passionate warmth of her untutored nature. Her life was a dream of love and joy, but that dark doorway was

the end—reality for her began and ended there. Whenever a man most strongly resembles a fiend, it is surely when his brutal strength is turned against the frail weakness which is given him to shield.

Such were the scenes enacted in the old Seraglio, which stood upon a jutting point to the sea, fair without and foul within, like a whited sepulchre, and containing more horrors within its marble walls than the prolific imagination of Eugene Sue ever suggested. For hours I have gazed upon it from my terrace, to which I must now return. It formed the roof of the monastic portion of the building, and upon it was erected a little chapel dedicated to Maria Stella. It was a quiet place, too high up to be much frequented. There was a small room or sacristy attached to it, and a cell, the tenant of which I shall also describe.

A stunted, gnarled tree, which had found room for its roots in the rough masonry of

the dilapidated walls, overshadowed the chapel, and a statue of Maria Stella, dressed in the usual blue wrapper. Her hands were extended, not conveying the poetic idea of *Refugium Peccatorum*, but holding in one a toy ship, and in the other two ostrich-eggs, which she appeared to be offering perpetually for sale; thus destroying the only scrap of poetry in this dreary abode. I sincerely blessed the storm which one night broke the two eggs, carried the tiny ship to sea, and so bedabbled the blue morning gown as to induce the inmate of the cell to appear the following day with a brush and a can of white paint, and evidently to her own satisfaction, and very much to mine, she tore with impious hands the tawdry finery from the figure, and setting to work with a will and plenty of paint, it speedily assumed a more ethereal and spiritualized character than it had before, and was at least *virgo purissima*, looking in the moonlight like the ghost

of the Saint Marizinga of whom the legend told as follows:—

In the days of Constantine there had been a convent built here, the old walls of which still remained, and when the fiery Turk ravaged the fair San Sophia, Marizinga was abbess of it; and she is recorded not as an ecstatic saint, (as the fashion of those days was, living in rocky caves and other dismal places,) but a practical and useful sort of a saint, who in default of lighthouse and revolving lights thereon, hung out a bell which swung in every breeze, and by its welcome sounds aided the bewildered mariners to a safe retreat from danger. After the sacking of San Sophia the monastery offered the richest booty, both in replenishing the pocket and the harem; but Marizinga was a brave woman, and had a purpose and an object in life, and yielding up her golden candlesticks and rich altar decorations, she bade the sisterhood take care of themselves as they best might,

saying that she should remain in defence of her bell. The Turks arrived, and she with prayers and entreaties begged that her bell might remain, if her life were sacrificed; but in the heat of slaughter, passion, and strife, the Turk had changed his human for a viler nature, and was deaf to her appeal. They cut down the bell, and slew her upon it, her last words being a prayer to Maria Stella, that the bell, though cut down, might ring to all eternity. The prayer was granted: and when the wind is high a silver bell is still heard ringing in the old tree.

This short sketch was given me by the sister, as she alternately painted and took long steady looks down the Bosphorus through a small telescope which she drew from her capacious pocket. As she will frequently appear in these pages, I will proceed to describe her before going any further.

At first sight I was irresistibly allured

towards her; but there was nothing that I could define as striking about her. She was neither handsome, lovely, sweet, nor grand-looking; yet at times she was all these. In stature she was little above the common height, slight in figure and gracefully formed. She had the small feet, hands, and ears, indicative of high breeding. Her features are almost impossible to portray, as they varied with every emotion of the ever-active mind within, to the most extraordinary degree I ever witnessed. Her skin was delicately white, I may say colourless: the mouth small and firmly closed, showing much decision of purpose. Her eyes were of that deep blue which melts into the shade of the violet, or looks up bright and clear with the tint of the forget-me-not. Under the dark lashes there was usually a dreamy and mysterious expression, as of some awful past, or foreshadowing a future fate of no common vicissitude. It was a strange

face, with more underneath than the imagination could ever guess at; but when in conversation there was a magnetic fascination, from the influence of which it was impossible to escape. Her eyes were luminous, and said a thousand things for which words fell short: they flashed with haughty defiance, or grew cold with stern decision; were soft and melting in pity or love, or brimmed over with archness. She was a Lady Macbeth, a Desdemona, or a Diana Vernon in rapid succession, as circumstances called each character forth. She was in earnest reality what Lady Hamilton so ably personified, and made me both weep and laugh more than I had done for years.

She wore the blue woollen dress of the order (which, though quaint and ugly enough, failed to disguise the supple ease of her figure), a long apron of the same material, and a squarely-cut white collar, dinned on each side of the bosom. A

narrow strap confined the taper waist, and from it hung the rosary, scissors, corkscrew, knife, file, keys, &c.—a sort of chatelaine of piety and utility combined. On her head she wore the white linen dress or veil, which, while a little projecting in front, extended in eccentric folds behind, a band of the same material and colour running straight across the forehead, to the great disfigurement of the face, giving it a corpse-like hue and form, conveying to the merriest face a sepulchral awesome expression; and until thoroughly habituated to this peculiar garment, the countenance of all the sisters wore to me the same ghostly aspect. Her feet were encased in miniature Wellington boots, which displayed the exquisite instep to perfection, and which were well adapted to meet the muddy exigencies of the service. Her first appearance to me was as odd as everything else appertaining to her.

One day being in deep meditation in the little chapel already described, a strain

of soft music, like the rich tone of a violoncello, reached my astonished ears, and one of Moore's sweet melodies was wafted to me. A violoncello playing Moore's melodies in Turkey was an event in my monotonous life; and I could not refrain from an immediate investigation of the marvel.

On reaching the terrace, to my unutterable surprise I beheld, perched outside the window, with her back to the cell and her small feet tightly laced round each other to support herself, the novice Thierna (for that was her name) bending affectionately over her instrument, from the D and G strings of which, by the time I arrived, she was producing the most heart-piercing sounds. Her quaint dress, her fiddle, queer position, and her tragic-looking eyes at the moment, made me fancy her something unearthly. Upon perceiving me she dropped lightly on the terrace, and approached. 'Pray continue,' I begged in my best French. 'Not now,' she replied, walking

towards the terrace which looked on the Black Sea. 'I am expecting two ships with wounded men; there has been a frightful slaughter at the Tracktir Bridge, and I was thinking over my fiddle what it was like; and the groans of the dying, and the screams of the wounded have startled you.' Her quick perception detected the shudder which came over me as I thought of my husband. She replied to my thought. 'The English were not engaged,' said she; 'it was in the French line; and yonder flies the tricolor; she is the "Austerlitz," is a three-decker, and will carry a thousand or more of wretched beings. I must seek help, and hasten to their relief.'

Ten minutes, and her white veil was floating like a line of silver against the blue water as her caïque swept swiftly along. The 'Austerlitz' had not cast her anchor ere Thierna stood on her deck surrounded by the horrors resulting from a sanguinary struggle on the battle-field.

A thousand Russian prisoners were there writhing in agony, cut and mangled as though some fury had been glutting his rage upon them; human forms which no mother could have recognized as her own, with limbs hanging loose from the body to which they could never more adhere; heaps of moaning, quivering beings, covered with rags, saturated with blood and dirt, pell-mell together they lay, the wounded, the dying, and the dead! The 'Austerlitz' had met with heavy weather, the ports had all been closed, and there had been no opportunity of separating the bodies of the peacefully slumbering, gone to their rest, from the living and those writhing with agony!

Between decks the air was putrid with animal decomposition and stench of undried gore, with which the decks were wet, thick, and sloppy as a thoroughfare in London after twenty-four hours' rain. There was a dull, heavy, indistinct sound of suppressed

groans and shrieks wrung from tortured minds and bodies, such as might only meet the ear outside the gates of Purgatory. The miserable creatures had been thoroughly embued with the idea that all prisoners taken by the enemy were doomed to a death of torture, and they did not possess the unmurmuring endurance of the French soldiers under their trials.

Into this scene of mortal agony came the delicate figure of Thierna; she spoke a word in Russian, and her Sister-of-Mercy dress told the rest. A wild ecstatic cry burst forth, and echoed through the ship; for they knew she came not as the harbinger of death, but of hope. All who could drag themselves, made towards her. The dying man was startled for a moment from his death-vision. He raised his trembling eyelids; saw the white veil and pitying eye; and believed that the great Ruler of all had sent an angel to gather him to his last abode.

In a few words, which no Frenchman on board had been able to speak, their fears were allayed. With light step she trod the revolting deck, and beginning with the nearest sufferers, went down on her knees without a shudder. She knelt and laid bare the ghastly wound without a shade of disgust passing over her face. With her scissors she proceeded to divest it of all that was galling and inflaming, applying charpie and clean linen with dexterously-twined bandages. She was followed by the captain, and a rugged tar who carried all the necessaries.

The captain had never ventured between decks before, but considered himself bound as a gentleman to accompany her whom his instinct told him was a lady. With sundry shrugs and bows to madame's admirable devotion, he put on his goloshes, declaring 'ce planche detestable,' and did the honours of the ship.

Arrived at the bottom of the com-

panion-ladder, he had insisted with much emphasis that madame's entrance there was 'impossible.' She passed him by unheeding. His gallantry compelled him to follow. 'It was impossible too,' he said, 'that she could kneel in so much filth. 'Ma foi,' he exclaimed, 'dans toute cette saleté!' Everything in like manner was 'impossible.' Weak minds, or minds purposeless, would have bowed in due submission to so potent a word; but as Nelson in his victorious career had treated the word 'fear,' so had Thierna treated 'impossible,' as unknown in the vocabulary of those who leave behind them 'footprints on the sands of time.' The captain was really uncomfortable at witnessing so much misery. He thrust his hands into his pockets, and talked of 'dévouement extraordinaire;' but in his heart he did not feel it, and sincerely wished she would give over or faint, when he would have had her carried to his cabin, and have displayed that exquisite politeness which only a

Frenchman can imagine. Failing in this, he looked for a short time for some sign of womanly weakness; a tear would have made him happy, but those soft eyes were too earnestly fixed on the wounds or face of the sufferer to admit of being dimmed by useless tears.

So the captain placed his small feet together, made himself rigid, raised his hat a good half-yard from his head, bowed from his hips forward, and said, 'Madame, je vous salue My sister in the Holy Church; I leave you to your angelic occupation;' and took himself back to his own cabin.

Not so the old sailor who had volunteered to carry the store of comforts, condiments, and appliances of Thierna. He had displayed a great amount of sympathy and assiduity in uncorking and corking bottles; measuring out wine, brandy, and beef-tea, with as much precision as though his own life depended on what he was

doing. One drop too much he scrupulously poured back again, one drop too little he supplied, patiently waiting, cup in hand, and presenting the medicine half a dozen times before it was wanted; he became fertile in inventions, discovered bits of wood for leg-rests, and bundles of anything for pillows. The hated Russian was a helpless, suffering man, and Jack's heart was melted to soft compassion. His devotion was as deep, his heroism as great, his pity as tender, as Thierna's; though it found vent only in the uncorking of bottles. There was a silent communion and oneness of feeling between those two, so dissimilar in appearance, as they knelt beside the sufferers, giving hopes for the future, and ease for the present, which established an union as of a long-tried friendship. Had they met ten years after on the Rocky Mountains or in a palace, she would have given and he would have taken her small hand in his rough hard palm, their souls would again

have mingled, true man, true woman, true to nature.

'Don't you touch him, madame,' suggested Jack tenderly, as they neared a dried-up pool of blood, surrounding a curled-up grey coat and knapsack; a human hand projecting alone indicated what it might be: 'don't you touch him,' he repeated. His manly heart would fain have spared her the icy chill which had just shot through his own veins from the touch of that clammy hand.

'Requiescat in pace!' replied Thierna, as she passed on to the next.

CHAPTER II.

HAVING no occupation, society, or books, I naturally became interested in the pursuits and lives of the inmates of this entirely new and strange little world, into which my destiny for the moment had thrown me. Few English people, I think, have any idea of the lives of these Sisters of the Propaganda. The uniformity of their dress and sameness of character are remarkable, for they are all ground down, if I may use the expression, to one peculiarity, viz., machine-like obedience, self-abnegation, and devotion to the cause. Like all monastic orders, it was under absolute government, one will dictating and being

carried out by the rest in every particular, unreasoningly and unjudgingly. Like a a well-drilled regiment ordered forth by the general to certain destruction, forward they go to death, without one farewell look cast behind. Great or small, the task must be executed, with the same faultless obedience to orders; whether they be to put out to sea during a storm in a mussel-shell caïque to meet a plague-ship, or to stand in the same spot for months, for years perhaps, perpetually washing up dirty plates, all must be done without a murmur or question.

One instance of this particularly struck me. There was a Sister Mabile whom I used to see day after day as I passed up to the terrace. Her occupation and object in life was mending old linen. She sat always in the same room, the same corner, the same chair, and in the same position; her spectacles half falling from her nose, in which attempt however they never succeeded, that organ having a little twist at

the end admirably adapted for keeping them on. There she had sat for months, and would probably do so until she was called to her long home, if the holy mother so commanded it. Long habit had become nature. She sat invariably in the same posture, never seeming to need or think of a change. Her face wore the same expression, or rather want of it. Her eyes seemed made merely to look for holes in the linen; her nose to rest spectacles upon; and her mouth to bite off the ends of her thread. As unvarying she was as the chair upon which she sat, and as unchanging as the walls within which she dwelt.

Her extraordinary immobility excited my attention, and induced me to inquire into her present and previous history. 'Would you not like a change,' I suggested; 'to serve in the hospital, or go on board the ships?'

'We each do the duty allotted us,' she replied, 'and mending linen is my portion.

We have but one thing to do in this world, —perfect obedience,—and our salvation is secured. It is not what we best like that is good for us; *au reste*, I was always quick at my needle as Thierna is fond of the sea. We call her the Sailor Sister, and what should we do without her?' she proceeded. 'May the saints protect her until we have done with fighting and ships! for few but English know the difference between a ship and a washing-tub; for myself I had never seen one before I saw the one that brought me here.'

'But what did you do before you came here—before you were a sister?' I continued.

'Much the same as I do now; my life has been a smooth gliding stream, and would fail to interest you. *La Sainte Vierge* has been a kind mother to me, watching over and shielding me from evil.'

'But when you were at home were there no events there? were you never in love?' I exclaimed. But even this sacrilegious

suggestion failed to produce a shadow of a change on her countenance.

'No,' she replied, 'I was never given to such worldly-mindedness. From the dawning of reason my worthy confessor had destined me for a bride of the Church.'

I could not help reflecting how surely and truly a woman's destiny is marriage, and how strongly it must be implanted in her heart, when in default of finding a husband congenial to her taste, she consoles herself by being wedded to the Holy Church —to religion; calls herself the Bride of Heaven, wears a wedding-ring, and takes the endearing name of mother.

Thus had not reasoned Mère Mabile, but she had acted upon it; for she, like the rest, entertained no small idea of their exalted position as spouses of the Church, and would describe the bridal-day with as much satisfaction as any other woman her wedding-day, and assuming the matronly air of a married woman, would speak of

the guests who were present, the flowers that were strewn over her, the flattering speeches made by the bishop about the dignity of her exalted choice, and the beatitude of the bride of Heaven, and of all the extraordinary attentions paid by every one; coming up to and actually surpassing a real wedding, as shams ever announce themselves with a louder flourish of trumpets than realities.

Mother Mabile went on with her story: 'I was the only child of my parents, who were well to do in the world; they were proprietors of a productive farm. No misfortunes or troubles ever fell on our peaceful roof; we lived comfortably and happily, one day much like another. The various seasons brought their various employments, but one year was the same as another. My mother attended to the ménage or housekeeping; my father to the crops, the almanac, and the weather-glass; and I to my embroidery and devotions. My parents died within a

few weeks of each other, calmly as they had lived; the Lord called them, and their end was peace! My spiritual father took their place towards me. "My child," he said, "you have come into possession of worldly goods; let your first act be to endow with them your heavenly Bridegroom."

'I knew that in obeying I followed the will of Him whose minister on earth he was, so the farm and stock were realised and converted into cash, and under the care of Père Lemaire, I quitted for the first time and for ever the paternal roof; I asked not whither, for I wished my submission to be perfect, and my obedience voluntary. My faith was strong that he would lead me in the way of true salvation, and I made no idle inquiries. We travelled until we reached a land where the tongue was new to me, and where I did not understand a word that was said; finally we arrived at a convent.

'For this particular order my director

said I had a decided vocation. I was received with open arms by the holy mother, and my small fortune by the mother's assistant-treasurer. I did not know one word of the many kind things they said to me; but my director informed me as he left me, with his last blessing, that my sacrifice was all the more noble for the obstacles and trials I should have to encounter, and more meritorious in the sight of heaven.'

'Good gracious!' I exclaimed, 'were you then left in a place where you could not speak a word of the language? What a merciless trial for a woman!'

'Holy obedience,' she replied, 'softens down all difficulties. I did not need to speak; I was put to work to mend linen with another sister. I had only to follow her example, and the language came by degrees.'

Such was the history of Mère Mabile—one of untiring self-abnegation and devotion.

At this time much was written and said about the volunteers in the cause of charity, but of this devoted, regularly disciplined band of the Propaganda, little is known out of the circle of their labours. Yet they were not all menders of linen or washers of plates. There were heroines amongst them, who laid down their lives in the cause, and died martyrs to charity. Why they were not considered so, was simply because there were too many of them, and self-martyrdom was too common. Novelty has a charm for the mind, which the noblest devotion fails to excite when it becomes habitual. So well is this truism understood in these days, that everything is paraded as new to obtain the smallest portion of notice—the greatest novelty draws the greatest crowd.

'Anything new in the House last night?' says the M.P., who was not there. He does not ask if any rankling and vexatious old Act had been repealed.

'Can you tell me of a new song?' says Clara to her friend. She never heard of Pergolesi, and has almost forgotten Mozart.

'Have you got a new novel?' inquires the lounger of the librarian. 'Yes, sir, one in this morning; quite new, sir; leaves not cut—"The Fainting Flower," by Lady Fanella Fanwood.'

'Have you heard the new opera?' inquires the morning caller. 'Oh, you must —it is so novel; all the crotchets where the quavers ought to be; contralto singing soprano, and tenors making the most peculiar noise.'

Everything must be novel, or it might as well be nothing. If a man's idea is not novel he had better keep it for his own service; if he wishes to excite notice he must put his horse's head where its tail should be, and he is sure of success.

Now the order of the Propaganda had been established some two centuries, and had no claim to novelty. Wherever misery

had appeared in the shape of war, famine, or pestilence, there had fallen so many martyrs from this order. We have had our Howards and Mrs. Frys—grand, noble characters, standing out finely in the history of benevolence; but if you were to multiply them by fifty, or one hundred, they would cease to excite our wonder; and with wonder falls much veneration. When the cholera was raging, those devoted women toiled day and night in the pestilential hospitals without regular rest or food; what they took of the latter being of the coarsest description, consisting principally of vegetable soup, semolina, and fruit. Even the last small luxury they would often abstain from, that they might carry it to their convalescent patients.

From bed to bed, with gentle words of comfort and religion—healing balm for the spirit as well as the body; leaving nothing undone, they never became weary or relaxed until they dropped from the ranks;

then another stepped into the vacant place to carry out the same duties. A few days, hours, perchance, and she also lay, self-immolated, with the wreath of everlasting flowers on her breast, her hands folded in the sign of a cross, stretched on the bier in the centre of the church, awaiting the *Miserere*.

I grew so accustomed to this silent disappearance, that when I saw a new face in an old place I merely went to the church to take a farewell look at the placid features, now calm in the stillness of death, and join in the *Miserere* with the assembled sisterhood, each bearing a long, yellow, wax candle. After the chanting of the *Dies Iræ*, in the performance of which Thierna, who played the organ, made it moan and wail like a spirit in purgatory, until my blood chilled and my flesh seemed to creep, the bier was taken away, and the corpse held in a sheet by six sisters, all the rest assembling round with their lighted

tapers. So the procession moved on to the tomb, which was a peculiar one. Traversing several rooms we came to a narrow, flagged passage open to the sky, at the end of which was a dark, massive door, which was unlocked by a large, rusty key. The door slowly opening to the united efforts of three sisters, disclosed utter darkness. The corners of the sheet were then tied together, and the corpse placed in this charnel-house along with other dead sisters; the living ones locking the door, blowing out their candles, and returning each to her post.

In most cases the sisters fell victims to fever induced by over-fatigue, more than from infection or the unwholesome atmosphere of the hospitals; in other cases from cholera brought on by pure fright and terror. Young and naturally timid women, brought for the first time, perhaps suddenly, into scenes of anguish and horror from which their gentle natures recoiled, yet

bound by the rigour of their vow of obedience to walk through fire if so commanded, like the boy ensign bearing the standard in his young hand rushing forth to the attack is the first to fall, so their frail natures succumbed.

Such a character was sister Eulalie, with her dove-like face and timid, innocent eyes, where the shadow of evil had never passed. Limpid and pure as a tiny rill revealing all its pebbly treasures, her soul was as transparent, her voice as silvery and low; an angel spirit walking the earth for a time, but too holy for it. Slight in figure, but rather tall, she reminded me of a young vine or honeysuckle wanting to cling round a stronger stem. I fear her mock bridal, had she ever reached it, would not have supplied this real want of her nature; she had no strength to stand alone; her slender waist called for a strong arm to support it; and her delicate, taper fingers a broad shoulder to rest upon.

So at least I used to picture to myself as I watched her gliding nymph-like about that dreary abode. She was ordered on the ship department with Thierna. I saw her embark on her first voyage in the caïque; her last, poor child, in this world! With every movement of these eccentric boats her colour came and went; she was as frightened as a child. In vain Thierna, with her quick perception, expatiated on the beauty, the safety, the admirable adaptability of these boats to the Bosphorus, of which she herself was so fully aware. At last they neared the ship. The captain was standing on the bridge, roaring through his trumpet 'Keep off! keep off!' this is a plague-ship; we have six hundred men on board of us down with the cholera!' Thierna, knowing it was useless attempting to answer, urged on the caïque, and was soon alongside, the captain still vociferating, 'Are you mad?—keep off!' There was no gangway down, but the rope-ladder hung

from the ship's side, and by this Thierna had made a rapid ascent ere the captain, who was an American, had reluctantly ordered the gangway to be lowered for Eulalie, whose courage had failed her to climb, observing he hoped she would have more sense than to follow. 'Lord 'a mercy!' he exclaimed, as Thierna appeared over the bulwarks and swung down by the ropes with sailor-like agility, as she had done fifty times before. 'Lord 'a mercy!' he repeated, staring in stupid amazement at the queer costume. 'What 'ave we got aboard on us! I've seen many a queer un in female guise on the coast of Africa; but never one that would scale a ship's side to board a plague-vessel.'

Eulalie, who had mounted, looking more dead than alive, proceeded with her companion to the ship's hold. There, writhing in agonies of pain, lay six hundred men in various stages of cholera; some rolling about in excruciating torture, others in a

collapsed state, the extremities cold, rigid, and the face blue, others locked in the tightening grasp of death. It was a slough of anguish.

The sweet face of Eulalie turned sickening from the sight, her lips becoming livid, the warm blood returning chill to her heart and freezing in her veins with horror. 'Go back,' said Thierna, laying a firm hand upon her; 'go, there are not so very many. I can manage alone, go; try to induce that rough captain to let us have some hot water,' she added, hitting upon any device to get her away, as Eulalie still hesitated, her eyes becoming fixed with a terrified stare, her whole frame shaking, and drops of perspiration starting on her forehead. 'Go, for God's sake!' repeated Thierna, with energy.

'I was ordered to follow you,' returned the self-martyr, with a quivering voice. 'So it is His will that I should remain.'

A shade of despair shot across the ex-

pressive face of Thierna; then, like lightning, a determined purpose.

'The hot water,' she said: 'I must have it, and it is your duty to go and get it.' With these words she led her to the ladder which she tremblingly ascended.

Thierna turned to her wretched patients; but no sooner had her companion reached the deck, than she drew the ladder from the perpendicular to such a sloping angle that it could not be descended, at least by Eulalie; she muttered to herself, 'for she would die if she came down here again.' So she went on with her labours, using opium, brandy, soda, and calomel at her discretion, lulling the pain of the living, raising to hopes of God's mercy the thoughts of the dying, receiving the last sorrowing words of the son, to whom death recalled the image of his mother. Taking down on small tablets the address and the words of the last farewell, which mostly ran: 'To my mother Marie Legrand. Pray for the soul of your

son Pierre, who wild and wayward caused you many tears; not knowing how few were your joys save in him. He thought of you at his death and sends you this.' One beautiful trait in the French soldier's character was his devoted, childlike attachment to his mother. 'Ma mère' was always the subject they loved to dwell upon when disease or the approach of death dispelled the illusions and empty shadows of their past life. 'I have only one comfort,' he would say, 'which is, that my mother does not see my miseries.'

When Eulalie returned in half an hour, she discovered the absence of the ladder. In vain in her musical Italian she appealed to the American sailors to replace it for her, all she got was 'bono Johnny.' Thierna had disappeared in the depths of the ship's hold, into the realms of darkness, pestilence, and death. Hour after hour her companion waited for her, now and then administering comfort to a few wan-looking sailors who

were suffering the reaction from cholera. The night came on and the air felt chilly; cold shudders passed over her whole frame. She thought Thierna too must have died in that dark abyss. The captain also was getting uneasy, and sent down a messenger.

'You'll find her most likely a stiff un, and sarve her right for such tarnation folly.—The other there,' poking his lantern into her face, 'is looking uncommon like some others as I've seen before they are taken with the gripps.'

With the messenger appeared the white veil of Thierna: she hastily took her companion by the hand. 'You are cold,' said she, deathly cold she thought; and producing her flask, she offered her companion a table-spoonful of brandy.

'Oh, it is a fast,' sighed Eulalie: 'I dare not touch it.'

'Take it,' s aid the other, decisively; and she forced it through her lips.

They then descended to the caïque. As-

they floated over the hushed waves, leaving the plague-ship like a phantom spirit of evil looming in the distance, the mountains on either side stood out in graceful outline against the dark-blue sky, and a solemn stillness hung over all as though Nature held her breath to listen. Angels' wings came fluttering round one of those young heads covered by the white veil, and marked it for their own with a shining cross. The wind softly sighed 'Amen.' 'The stars arose and the night was holy.'

That evening she knelt at prayers; the following she lay in the church with her hands folded in the form of a cross, and a wreath of fresh wild flowers on her breast,— the last token of love from Thierna, who had vowed she should not be buried with the everlasting dead-wreath, but with wild flowers, emblems fresh and pure as herself.

CHAPTER III.

SPEAKING with Thierna on the terrace about this melancholy and sudden death, which she seemed to feel bitterly,—'I wish I had left her in the boat and told the caïquejee to shove off,' said she, as the tears started from her eyes, though instantly checked by the firm little mouth. 'I might have saved her, so good, so lovable, and loving.'

'But here what could she love, or how be happy with her nature?' I observed.

'True,' she sighed; 'her life was all patience and suffering; for she never could have become selfish, or have lived for herself and none other; without affection her

life would have been a dreary waste, like a lonely dell where the sun's rays could never penetrate, or a lovely hare-bell growing by itself all alone on the rock-side.'

'And then,' I continued, archly, 'you would have had remorse for such a declared act of disobedience, if you had prevented her carrying out her orders.'

Her short lip gave a scornful twist as she replied, with great contempt, 'I have no scruples of conscience about my conduct in that respect, and only regret I did not do more. Obedience, like all other virtues, may be carried to such an extreme that it becomes vice. Poor Eulalie, had she been placed in the convalescent wards, the *pharmacie*, or many other departments, would have been alive now, a useful servant devoted to charity. But she attempted, through a false idea of virtue, to make a sacrifice she was physically and mentally incapable of completing. She paid for the infatuation with her young life. But even

had she lived she was helpless and worthless in such a position; her self-martyrdom was unavailing; no one was benefited by her implicit obedience. She would have done as much good had she turned perpetual *pirouettes* through obedience. Self-abnegation for the good of humanity or individuals is a noble thing; but to puncture one's body with pins simply because some one asserts their right to dictate it, and commands you to obey, is to me only absurd. I cannot see any virtue in it, neither can I see either philosophy or sanctity in making one's self miserable without a cause, and to no end or purpose. I never could understand the philosophy of living in a tub like Diogenes, when he had all the great, beautiful world to walk upon; or St. Stylites sitting upon a pillar and thinking himself more acceptable to heaven, only because he was nigher the clouds than his brethren. Does the great Creator love that we should set all the eternal laws of

nature at defiance, and call our fantastic egotism sacrifices to him? Did our Master and Teacher ever perform a useless miracle? Was it not to heal the suffering or comfort the afflicted? Let us obey the holy, wise, and true—the laws of God and nature, not putting sharp pebbles for penance under the feet made to step on flat surfaces, or tearing the flesh, so delicate in its texture, with sharp-pointed nails, iron girdles, and shirts made of bristles, while wool grows on the back of the sheep, and flax in the meadows. If this be saintly and virtuous, go to the dervish mosque, and you will see it to perfection; there the fanatical devotee howls and jumps until his voice dies off in a gasp, his limbs become powerless, and he falls back fainting; whilst others seize upon instruments of torture hung around the sanctorum—such as pincers, skewers, knives—and rend and tear their flesh. If this be pleasing to Allah, surely it is not to our Lord of love, who

never implanted a single thorn in his divine brow, but bore all as it was written of him—as it is written somewhere of us all,—and we must bear with patience, fortitude, and resignation the destiny marked out for us. But self-torture, if wrong in itself, becomes no better when submitted to from blind obedience to the will of another, never exercising and treating as nought the share of judgment that Providence has bestowed on each.'

As she spoke her face portrayed every feeling of her mind, and in her eyes was a clear, open, determined expression boding no end of defiance to holy obedience.

'Oh,' said I, for I took a malicious pleasure in exciting her, 'the sisterhood are much distressed that you are wasting all the bright crowns you might be laying up in heaven by your want of obedience.'

'Yes,' she replied, 'they say I have no merit in my sacrifices, because I am acting from my own will and not theirs: I do

what I conscientiously believe to be my duty. To go where misery calls me, and obey not my will or theirs, but the demands and necessities of the case, that is God's will, as I take it. Was it a crime,' she added, laughing, 'that I tore off the end of my veil to bandage a man's foot when I ran short of linen? Well, for that shocking act of disobedience, (for I was told not, and persisted,) I was ordered to write out a large placard relating my crime, pin it to my back, and kneel in one of the principal doorways. This was done to humiliate me; and I have seen timid spirits crushed and borne down under the false shame thus imposed. But my pride came from a more stubborn source, and I could not be brought to see it in this light at all. I had really no time for such nonsense; but as I had no help for it I made the best of it, and instead of kneeling I rolled myself in the commodious Turkish fashion and went soundly to sleep, profiting by the lost time to recruit

my strength until my hour of penance for disobedience should have expired, awaking much refreshed from my nap. I thought of the old country adage, "One man may lead a horse to the water, but ten cannot gar him drink." So they might have decked me in peacock's feathers, or a Lord Chancellor's wig, which is in reality the most ludicrous thing in civilized life, but I am too humble,' said Thierna, laughingly, 'to feel wounded or debased by any of these things.'

'But,' continued I, 'are you not *fiancée?*' I had no time to finish my sentence,—'to the Church,' I was going to say, when she gave a quick, startled glance of meaning, and her face became suffused with bright scarlet, anything but a blush. It was red becoming redder every moment up to the white bandeau over her forehead, and down to the collar round her throat; her eyes drooped under their long lashes with a soft liquid light. I had unconsciously touched

a string that reverberated in the warm depths of her heart,—'that heart so full of emotion,—into its depths like a pebble drops some careless word, it overflows, and its secret spilt on the ground, like water can never be gathered together.' I knew from that moment that at Thierna's bridal there would be a more tangible form for the bridegroom than was consistent with the views of the Propaganda, and that the nuptial hymn, '*O quam bonus, et quam jucundus*,' might have a very different signification.

My unlucky question was never answered or the subject adverted to, but there was a secret understanding established between us. She made no attempt to deceive or lead me astray by any explanation, nor did I by any more questions seek to penetrate further.

Time passed on, the terrace became my best solace, and the conversation with Thierna my greatest enjoyment. Her al-

most reckless devotion to her calling, her unaffected self-denial, her total disregard of all shams, hypocrisy, and false pretences, her tenderness and anxiety for the sufferer under her care, her quick sense of the ridiculous, and marvellous appreciation of the beauties of God's works, endeared her to me so much, that I came to look upon her with a mother's affectionate solicitude, and I made it my business to administer homœopathic doses to her whenever I observed her eyes unnaturally bright with incipient fever, or that terrible languor from over-weariness, fatigue, and exhaustion, more dangerous and more fatal than infection.

CHAPTER IV.

It was one of those hot days peculiar to Stamboul, when the air is not only sultry and oppressive to a most painful degree, but literally seems to stagnate and become thick, when heat and dense feverish air seemed to be mixed up into a substance which weighs heavily on the limbs, and has to be swallowed with an effort, and respiration becomes consciously unpleasant.

There is no breeze from the Black Sea, which is the Turk's natural punka—his Elysium—and which alone makes the Bosphorus tolerable in the summer months. These days are rare, but this was one of them. A mortal stillness pervaded every-

thing; the trees hung their leaves as though they had fainted; the shadows even from the houses seemed to linger rather than move, dogs crept under them and lay motionless; Turks curled themselves up in corners of streets or of divans, and tried to sleep until Allah sent a cool wind, for it was too hot to smoke; Turkish women lay in marble baths, too hot to eat iced fruit; the European fidgeted, swore at the heat, threw off all needless garments, expanded himself in every direction in vain hope of catching a little air, declaring it too hot for anything, but there was none to catch. It was all heavy, thick, fetid—smelling, tasting of cholera, typhoid fever; and putrid cats and dogs everywhere bestrewing the streets. The sky was lurid, gloomy, sulphurous, and lowering; the earth like an oven of which the sky was the top. The boats on the Bosphorus lay as still as though they had been frozen in its dull waves, flags and pennants hung motionless by the side

of mast or flagstaff, sailors lay panting, swearing and swabbing their faces as though they were drying decks. All work and business were totally set aside, as though the world had stopped her machinery; no one stirred in the streets; even the birds sat on the boughs without even a chirp, waiting for the wind to change; the flies, which delight in the ordinary sunshine, lay on their backs in cataleptic trances, only to be restored to life with the Black Sea breeze. In the hospital, the patients were gasping for air: the Sisters who attempted to produce it by fanning were gasping with the effort. From the top of the nose of Mère Mabile, the drops of heat fell in regular succession, dimming the spectacles, and wetting the linen.

All the Sisters who could contrive it, went to the usually cool chapel, in order to make their meditations. Cyclops at the gate was no longer one, for she had closed her one vigilant eye, and let fall her bunch

of keys. It was too hot for anything; man and beast had arrived at that conclusion, and lay still. I had sought out every cool place or spot in my remembrance in vain; all was hot, stifling heat everywhere. By force of habit I had at length got up to the terrace chapel.

Maria Stella, in spite of the shade of the tree, was being blistered, the white paint cracking off. I feared much that such a state of stagnation could only be the prelude to an earthquake. I wondered if Thierna was toiling in this heat; and then gave up even thinking—it was too hot for that. How long I had resigned myself to this passive state I knew not; when I was aroused from my torpor by a loud noise on the terrace, as though some heavy body had fallen upon it. My first thought was of an earthquake; my second that I had been to sleep; but I now heard a distinct, firm step on the terrace. It might be Thierna, but sounded too heavy; surely

it was not a man's foot; a man on the nun's terrace! it could not be.

The cell of Thierna joined the chapel, and was used for the purpose of confession. A wire screen had been let into the partition, and on the chapel-side was placed the prie-dieu, or confessional. Forgetting the heat in my curiosity, I slipped inside to call Thierna. A man on the terrace I deemed an impossibility; but a man it was, in a foraging cap and dark-blue uniform, standing straight before the open window, and staring into the little cell. Had he fallen from the copper-coloured sky, my eyes could not have opened wider; but other eyes than mine had caught sight of the form. With a bound like a young antelope, Thierna sprang from her writing-table to within a couple of yards of the window, then stopped short, far more confused than when she had worn the placard of her crime. Her heaving breast raised the folds of her white collar, her

cheeks were suffused with a rose pink, her eyes looked up in melting azure, as she said in a tremulous voice, 'Cyril! don't you know me, Cyril?'

Her voice reached him like an electric wire: he bounded in through the window, and ere I could ejaculate my surprise, the supple figure was folded in the embrace of the stranger; his handsome brown beard and whiskers had got mingled and mixed up in a very odd way in the white veil, some of the folds drooping over his shoulder. Where the small head was I could not clearly distinguish. There was a fluttering in the escaped parts of the garments, like the ruffling of a bird's feathers struggling to get free; and a smothered masculine sound of 'darling! my own darling!' penetrating through the toque part of the head-dress.

'We must haul down that top-gallant sail,' he said, coming out from under the folds. He gave it a pluck, away flew the

veil, toque, bandeau, and all the paraphernalia of the monstrous head-gear. Thierna stood free, but no longer the Sister Thierna of yore; a wood-sprite, a Diana Vernon she more resembled. Her hair was turned back from her forehead, and curled in short clusters of tiny golden curls round the small patrician-like head.

With the veil had disappeared all that was solemn, severe, and old. She stood in her close-fitting habit, so neat, the personification of a bright, joyous wood-nymph, her eyes brim full of surprised delight, her mouth smiling, flexible, and soft, round her white teeth. No wonder he wanted to repeat jumping in at the window; but her eyes reproved him.

'Remember, I am a novice,' she said, trying hard to look demure and staid; 'and we are in a convent, a sacred place. You are no less sacrilegious than your ancestor Mars, who ran away with a vestal from the temple.'

'As I will run away with you,' he exclaimed, seating himself with great sang-froid on the small divan, and drawing her down beside him. You do not suppose I have clambered to this rook's nest for nothing but to find you made such a guy of, that I did not even know you?'

She shook her curly head, but that was the only negative she could muster. With her veil she seemed to have lost her usual decision and power; under his influence she became at once a yielding, gentle child. To him she seemed to have transferred her head as well as her heart, 'as if in one long kiss he drew her whole soul through her lips, as sunlight drinketh dew.'

This masculine apparition—for so I was bound to consider him—was not strictly or regularly handsome. There was something more than that; he wore the stamp of power,—of manly, undaunted, fearless bearing. His head was proudly set on, as though it could never bow save to catch

the whisper of a woman. His forehead was massive and square, the hair of a rich brown, growing in its own way, guiltless of artificial aid. The eye deep grey, overshadowed by long lashes, full, calm, and decisive. On the brow, which was a little heavy, indomitable will had set her seal, and his face would have had a stern character had it not been relieved by the mouth, which was full, soft, and might have been a shade too voluptuous, but for the shadow of a silky moustache; his teeth, which were of exquisite form and dazzling whiteness, threw an undefinable charm when he smiled. A soft, handsome, brown beard, I have already described as making acquaintance with the veil of Thierna. A little above the middle height, his shoulders were wide and square, his chest broad and handsome. Strength and power were marked in every limb, without destroying the perfect symmetry and beauty which the shell jacket was well calculated to set off to ad-

vantage. It was buttoned up to the throat with tiny buttons, on which was written a word: it might be '*ubique.*'

'What in the name of wonder are we sitting on?' said he, in a tone of perplexed discomfort.

'On my bed at night and divan in the day,' she replied.

'But it is nothing but sharp bars of iron,' he said, raising the thin mattress stuffed with chaff; 'do you sleep on this?'

'Yes,' she said; 'and dream I am Saint Lawrence on the gridiron.'

'You would be far better off in a hammock, poor child!' said he, as he drew her gently towards him, and stroked the only bit of smooth hair from her forehead. 'Ah! what has become of it all?' he suddenly exclaimed, as he drew out to its full length the little short curl, for the first time discovering the loss of the long tresses; 'did they cut it off? the monsters!'

'Oh, no,' she laughed; 'I cut it off

myself, and the angel Gabriel has got a wig made of it, or I would have saved it for you. But I was obliged to make the sacrifice, for one day on board a sick ship, where there were a number of Italian officers (Italians are insane on light hair), a high wind carried off my veil and *et ceteras*, as you have done now. My hair came loose, and was blown into such picturesque disorder, as to excite the admiration of the Italians. The event was reported at head-quarters to the holy mother, pronounced indecorous, improper, unbecoming a sister and a novice, and I was ordered on duty in the laundry, to perpetual ironing of toques, veils, and collars. You ought to know how wicked I am,' she pouted affectionately, 'so I will confess that I singed them rather brown, and ironed them into such eccentric shapes, that the sisterhood could not make use of them. I appeared before the holy mother with my rebellious locks in hand and a close-shaven

head. She commended me for the sacrifice of such earthly vanities, and prophesied that, if I had only had the virtue to wait until I had been desired so to despoil myself, I should merit to be a saint some day; for "obedience is greater than sacrifice."'

'A saint!' growled Cyril, making a deprecating face. 'That soars far beyond the summit of my wishes. I should prefer you a dear little wicked girl, singeing the linen, infinitely; and to prevent such a catastrophe of saintship being conferred upon you, I will tie you, before twenty-four hours are over, in a matrimonial knot, so as to destroy all prospect of sainthood in the future, and prevent you taking wings and flying away from me or becoming a Will-o'-the-wisp any more,' he added, crushing her yielding hand in his powerful grasp, his eyes drinking in deep draughts of love and happiness from her upturned, loving, childlike face.

'But, Cyril,' she whispered tremblingly —he had absorbed her power of resistance —'you do not want to take me away from here now?'

'Not want to take you,' he echoed, 'you small offender! can you look me in the face,' and he took her head between his hands and placed it opposite to his own, 'and ask me that? Have you not led me a wild-goose chase half over Europe? And now you select Asia! Have I not gone about asking for a fair-haired little girl, like the love-sick swain singing 'Shepherds, tell me, tell me, have you seen my Flora pass this way?' And how many Floras did I bring to bay, but never the right one. Then I went Banshee-hunting, for that was the name of your phantom yacht. Was I not put into lazaretto at Naples, wrecked off the Greek islands, burnt up on the coast of Tunis? Then you escaped for good, and left no trace, and I got into disgrace for taking *French*

leave of absence. Have I not climbed a minaret and crawled the tiles like a cat to get here? Have you not been a land-sprite and a sea-syren, alluring me on to the risk of my neck and limbs—to say nothing of my commission? and you ask me if I want you now! Now that I have caught the phantom will I never leave go; so come along. How shall we get her down!' And he rose as if to put his purpose into execution. 'You are not afraid of the descent?' he asked, as she held back.

'No,' she replied, softly placing her hand upon him confidingly; 'I shall never fear to go wherever you guide. But listen, I must speak. And do not look so stern, or I cannot proceed with my speech.'

'Did I, my own?' his face softening into a tender expression, 'it was quite involuntary. Pray proceed.'

'You know,' she went on, 'that all that cross-purpose playing was not my fault—

circumstances over which I had no control —and at that time I should not have offered one word of demur. But now I have a clear path of duty before me, a task to perform, a high and holy office to fulfil, far nobler than what your honour demands of you. I am the handmaid of the King of kings, and do his work; you but the servant of an earthly sovereign; yet I may not ask you to forego your honourable calling. You must risk your life though fifty Thiernas hung upon it, because you have given yourself to the defence of your country: I must continue to expose mine, because I have vowed myself to the cause of humanity and charity.'

'You had no right to vow,' burst in Cyril, 'or bestow yourself; you belonged to me—a piece of personal property, which I lay claim to. There has been a law from all eternity that what a man finds in the sea becomes his by right that none shall dispute; and if I deprived the French

fishes of such a dainty morsel' (here he lifted her from the floor like a toy), 'it was not that she should now become food for cholera, fever, and Turkish worms. No, come away, away, small philanthropist. If you wish to amend mankind and do deeds of love and charity, I am in my own person an inexhaustible mine for your labour.'

'Oh, Cyril!' she exclaimed, looking really distressed, and feeling herself helpless to resist that powerful will, 'how can you be so wicked? I am really alarmed. Pray go.'

'Come away, then; and can you not get that Saint Gabriel's wig conveniently? that is all I care to carry off besides yourself.'

'Gabriel was not a saint, but an angel. For mercy's sake go. Good gracious! if holy mother came!'

'Holy mother is asleep in this heat;' and he went on singing:

'Holy mother awoke, and she heard a noise at the midnight hour.
She counted her brood, and missing a bird she sought it in hill and tower.
The ladder she spied, and down she hied, but she tumbled into the water.'

'Will you have the *refrain?*' he laughed.

'No, you are impious, and I am terrified.'

She looked spell-bound, or mesmerized. I began to believe in Odic force—the magnetic force of attraction. He would most certainly carry his purpose, though I read in her face that she would have given many days of her peaceful life for one moment's power of resistance; for one glance of that quiet decision with which she usually carried her ends. In vain she struggled; she was clearly under some influence which paralyzed her mind. Her expression was piteous and irresistible to me. I could not help coming to the rescue by giving the *prie-dieu* a slight push, thereby making a noise.

'Oh, heavens! I am lost, it is the holy

mother! Fly! think if they find you here. Oh, fly! think, think!' she sank back gasping with terror.

For a moment he stood dauntless, like a stag brought to bay. Then turning a look of deep affection upon her, said, 'Poor small child, she cannot brave it now!' imprinted a burning kiss on her unresisting forehead, cleared the window at a bound, and was gone.

Thierna sat the picture of intense listening, but too frightened to hear anything but her own heart's audible beating. Suddenly her eye fell on the foraging cap. 'Merciful goodness! he has left his cap. I have nowhere to hide it, it must go after him.' She disappeared on the terrace; in her absence I took my way back to my birdcage. No doubt she reassured herself upon her return. In the solitude of my cage I had time to indulge in a burst of laughter at the extraordinary scene I had just witnessed in the sacred limits of the

S—— Monastery. The dashing boldness of the lover, and the ludicrous transformation of the lady from the solemnly demure novice to the sprightly, mischievous Catherine Seaton, was a scene never excelled in any drama. It only required the actual arrival of holy mother, to have made it a play of deep and thrilling interest.

However, I was glad for Thierna's sake that I was the only recipient of her secret. My next consideration was how to act under the very delicate and peculiar circumstances, for I felt that such a rash proceeding could not be repeated, and that the poor child, as he called her, had no control over her unruly, venturesome lover. I felt that it was a case of—

> 'Thro' forests I'll follow
> And where the sea flows,
> Thro' death and thro' danger,
> Thro' legions of foes.'

Unsuspecting, trusting, as she was,—daring, unconventional, reckless of conse-

quences as he was,—I felt that she needed an older and more cautious hand to take the helm of their storm-tossed barque: and I knew it would be most distressing to her to be forcibly taken from the charitable avocation in which she laboured with such earnest zeal and devotion. She was fond of summing up how many lives she had been able to save, how much suffering to alleviate, and how many made happy for the moment by only talking to them, leading their imagination back to other and sunnier times. 'They are so pleased,' she would say, 'in those weary convalescent wards, to cheat away an hour by tales of their boyhood, of their mothers, and their village.' She had an intense sympathy for all human suffering, and a boundless resource of remedy. With her, to feel sorry was to help. One day, passing a sort of lumber-room, I saw her bending down, one knee upon a low bench, sawing vigorously at a plank.

'What! have they made you carpenter?' I exclaimed.

'I am obliged to be a great many things when needed,' she replied. 'I am making a leg-rest for a poor fellow, who they say can do without one, as there is a scarcity, and he suffers horribly. Might I trouble you for a little pomatum?'

'Oh, fie! do you indulge in such vanities?'

'No,' she laughed; 'I want to grease my saw; you see how it sticks. I have seen men do so, and no doubt it makes it slip.'

She looked flushed in the face, her small hands were swollen and bruised; but with the pomatum she accomplished her task and carried off the plank, now the right length, in great triumph to her suffering patient. 'Every one,' she would argue, 'ought to have an object in life; and that object ought to be to do good to those around us, and fulfil the duties which lie

before us. If people kept the two first commandments the rest would keep themselves. To love God, above all things, with that deep reverential love which all nature inspires, from the dawn of morn to the sunset, is comparatively easy. But, to love one's neighbour as one's self, especially when they are dirty like our poor soldiers, who never seem to rightly understand the utility of water in any form, is a most difficult task. Nevertheless, dirty or clean, this is our bounden duty; and my neighbours now are obviously ship's cargoes of filthy but suffering humanity.'

I knew well that no trials or vicissitudes could have withheld her from following to the utmost this which she sincerely believed her path of duty, and the fulfilling of the second commandment, but the magnetic fascination of the hero of the terrace. I knew her too well not to be aware that she would have experienced much regret, if not remorse, had he succeeded in his bold

exploit. Although her young life was hourly in danger, and I often feared to find her delirious on that small hard divan, yet I could not bring one selfish or worldly thought to trouble that clear stream of pure human devotion, and trusted to Him who best saw her use on earth, to spare her here; but that the foraging cap should monopolize her enthusiastic nature to his own individual self, I felt ought to be prevented.

I resolved therefore to break the ice, and give my advice on the matter, though generally a thankless task. And naturally so; for how can the eyes of the young and tender still looking upwards into the clear azure, see into the dark subtleties and cruel mysteries of human life? Like one who having looked on the sun retains the dazzling splendour in his own vision, and cannot for some time distinguish the dark and earthly objects around him; so, hope, joy, and all the fresh springing passions of

youth, obscure from his gaze the sad and painful realities of life. Therefore is it that youth cannot take advice from age. It may *obey*, but cannot see the wisdom. This wisdom must be bought dearly, and with much heart-sore and bitter disappointment.

Experientia docet.

Every time it trips and falls the upturned gaze is lowered a little towards earth, until gradually it rises no longer to the dazzling sun, but looks right onward calm and steady upon realities. How many have to teach their eyes to penetrate deep gulfs of darkness, unshrinking and resigned!

For several days I watched in vain for an opportunity to speak my warning. She was not on the terrace, or in the little cell, the Turkish *jalouses* of which I observed were constantly closed. I lay in wait for her in her usual haunts, but never caught a glimpse of her white veil. What had

become of her? I was afraid to ask directly, but ventured upon a mild inquiry of Cyclops, who turned her one savage eye upon me, threw up her head with the peculiar Turkish sound which is uttered by placing the tongue against the palate, and suddenly dropping the lower jaw; after which negative it is hopeless to gain a syllable from a Turk. I wondered whether he (I mean the Romeo) had carried off his Juliet without creating any suspicion; or whether vigilance had been aroused? Indeed I felt a sort of nervous anxiety about certain dark gratings of cellars or subterranean passages.

I stopped a little near them, and coughed, in order that if any person were inside, there might be some response. Or perhaps the thought thrilled me, that she might be in the chapel, lying with the everlasting wreath! I endeavoured to muster my nerves to bear the sight. I felt she was there, and the tears gushed from my eyes. I thought even of Romeo with regret. At

that moment I would have gladly helped him to steal her away.

What a strange tenacity we have to life, not only to our own but to others! We can rarely reason ourselves into parting with it, though it be miserable, wretched, suffering, degraded. Still we cling and hope to keep it a little longer. Though we know that the change is from sorrow to gladness, from war to peace, from suffering to enjoyment, from a lower animal to a higher spiritualized state; still we cannot welcome the messenger, or welcome the old man with his scythe. So I tried to argue with myself as I directed my steps towards the chapel. Thierna, I feared, was gone 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest;' and yet I could rather have wished to see her toiling from ship to ship; burnt up under a blazing sun or soaked through and through in the drenching rain; kneeling in all the filth of the ship's hold, inhaling the fœtid breath of

her patient; throwing herself weary and exhausted on her 'divan,' her heart full of sorrow from some recent tragic scene more painful than ordinary;—all this I would rather have beheld than the placid look of calm repose which marked the end of the sisters of the Propaganda.

A heavy curtain hung before the chapel door, on which was a painting, an Armenian device, representing a skeleton enveloped in the flames of purgatory: the flesh having been frizzled away, the bones were left to suffer *à perpétuité*, until some compassionate passer-by should drop a small coin into the alms-box, and thus purchase their relief. I raised the heavy curtain, and closed my eyes for a moment. I dared not look, but through the closed lid I saw her: I flew towards her; she was in a kneeling posture, her clasped hands raised above her head, which was slightly thrown back. She rose as I approached, and came towards me.

'Thank God, you are not dead!' I exclaimed, before I could stop myself.

'No, not dead; I was looking "towards the mountain from whence cometh help," for I need it much; I am sorely tempted, and my heart wants to yield, but I know I ought to resist it; and if the struggle is doomed to break it—well, let it burst. It says, somewhere, "He shall give his angels charge over thee," and often, in our greatest trials, some little incident unlooked-for—unthought-of—comes to give us new strength and vigour to do right. Do you think that is the interpretation of the promise?' she asked.

'I think it is not a bad one. "There is a Providence that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will;' and this Providence works out his ends through small as well as great events. But come to my bird-cage; I wish to have a chat with you.'

'For instance,' I resumed, on arriving there, 'if you, or any one, were on the

point of yielding to a temptation, not perhaps to positive wrong, but to a selfish pleasure, where duty demanded a sacrifice of that pleasure; and accidentally a *prie-dieu* fell over, and that was the incident on which the rest of the events turned to save you; would you not call that providential?' She coloured violently. 'It was I who moved the *prie-dieu* on the terrace.'

'God bless you!' she exclaimed, throwing herself on her knees beside me, and burying her face in my lap. 'You are the angel, then, in this instance; and you did save me. So I must now make my confession.'

She sat down on her feet in the Turkish fashion, with her two hands clasped in mine, her candid eyes looking straight up into my face, and continued,—

'I must begin by telling you that I am not a sister, though the belief is general that I am, and I wish it to be so understood. I conceived an intense desire and

unbounded enthusiasm to devote myself to the relief of the sufferers here; and I wished to obtain the protection of the Order and the dress, to enable me with more facility to carry out my views. As a young lady I was banned and barred in every way, with no scope wherein to exercise benevolence. Friends thought me too young, too foolish, too inexperienced, too delicate, too visionary, too everything in fact, even too good-looking. To rid myself of all these objections at once, I resolved to join the Propaganda; where, as you perceive, under this dress, all these objections at once vanished.'

'Exactly so; you look just ten years older, ten times uglier, and ten times everything else. You were quite right in that. On what terms did they admit you?'

'At first they thought I had received a special *grâce du bon Dieu.* I have a small fortune, which was not to be despised; and, lastly, on whatever terms I

entered, they never intend to part with me.'

'Then you will have to go down the ladder of ropes, after all?'

'Not until the war is at an end; and sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. I have no doubt I shall be able to make a more suitable exit when the time comes. So you see,' she continued, 'it is not quite so sacrilegious in me to love him as you might have supposed.'

'Certainly not,' I answered; 'if you do not allow such love to interfere with what you consider your duty.'

'Indeed, I was no party to that escalade to the terrace.'

'I am aware of that; but should you not have cautioned him not to return?'

'True, I ought to have done so; and in regard of this omission I am in constant fear, and dare not go near the terrace night or day. I have never chanced to meet him again, either in the street or on

the Bosphorus; but there was an English troop-ship sailed for the Black Sea yesterday; probably he has gone in her.'

We came to the conclusion that he was gone, and that we might walk the terrace in peace, without fear of being taken by assault.

'I should give a hint at head-quarters,' I said, 'that he was well qualified to be told off for the next storming party; his escalading propensities were marvellous.'

'His agility would depend,' said Thierna, 'very much upon what the fortress contained.'

'But tell me, for you know you can trust me, what do you intend doing in this affair?'

'I intend for once to adopt the advice which Talleyrand gave on a momentous question, which was—to "do nothing." He must resume his duty in the trenches, and I mine in the sick-room. If the proclamation of peace finds us both alive, then, ah, then! but I dare not dwell upon

it.' I fear,' she continued, 'I am doomed to a struggling existence, not a happy one, as it should be with him. *Ma chi sarà sarà.*'

'But,' I continued, 'are you sure your happiness would be so safe in his keeping? Is he not rather strong-willed and reckless?'

'He is rather bold and fearless of shocking conventionalisms; but he has a fine, noble character, combining much power and good; he would scorn to do anything he thought wrong; but rather despises the conventional formalities—the barrier of society, set up by the municipality to prevent the citizens going astray. Cyril has a contempt for people who have to be guarded by the sentinels of fear and consequences to make them do right. He jumps over the barriers, and it is prophesied will come to mischief; but if he is guided by his own true heart and honest mind, he never will, and I could not like him better if he let "I dare not wait upon I would, like the poor cat in the adage."

'Your theory sounds a very lofty one, but I am one of the sibyls who promise you no end of scrapes if you attempt to carry it out. Even here would you not be beatified before you were dead, if you would give up your own will, and walk within the restrictions prescribed by the order? And do you mean to say you would despise a man more for not daring to perpetrate a wicked deed, than if he had actually committed the act?'

'Yes, if fear for his own cowardly self were the only motive which withheld him. That would only be adding cowardice to his other crimes; for an unchecked desire to do wrong is already done in point of moral guilt, and in the sight of God. I have more respect for Lady Macbeth than for her lord, for whom I have none. She, under happier circumstances, might have been a noble character, but he could never be anything but a grovelling worm. A man who dare not meet his own deeds, or his

own wished-for deeds, is something below a wicked man; he is a crawling thing, and ought to be made to creep like other reptiles of that genus.'

'You are severe upon cowards,' I remarked. 'We shall see how your hero behaves under fire.'

'Oh, that is a physical matter, depending on vigorous nerves in his case, and he will distinguish himself without being aware of it.'

'But,' I interrupted, 'while you are discussing the merits of moral and physical courage, I am all impatient to hear more of—how shall I call him?'

'Call him Cyril, as I do; or, if you prefer it, call him Captain Etherington, of the Royal Cannoniers.'

'And, of course,' I observed, 'to be duly romantic, I may assume it was *love at first sight*; doubtless discovered you seated in an apple-tree, as you have a fancy for peculiar seats, such as window-sills, sycamore trees, *et cetera*.'

'I protest against your insinuations,' she laughed; 'my seats are chosen as a mere matter of convenience. I can see farther down the Bosphorus from the sycamore, and I cannot play the violin on a low seat: and with regard to Cyril, I was not in a tree of any description, or even on terra firma, but in the water, when he first saw me. If it was love at first sight, it must have been first sight—for he has never caught sight of me since until last week.'

'Good gracious! what an odd place to fall in love—in the water!—he must be a sort of sea-monster or merman.'

Our mutual laugh was interrupted by a knock at the door, and a beautiful fair head peeped in, asking for Thierna. It was Katina, the beautiful Russian. She came to say that there was a Polish officer in the visitor's room wishing to speak with the Sœur Thierna about the Russian prisoners.

'Oh, dear me! it is that dreadful man about the tobacco. He will insist upon

knowing how much tobacco I give the Russian prisoners; and if I did not upon one occasion give a piece of silver money to a poor Russian who had lost both his eyes, to purchase sour-krout with for his sole delectation. Poor wretch! tobacco and sour-krout are the only comfort left to him in his present state; so now to answer this dreadful charge, and show cause why I trespassed over the barrier.'

As she disappeared I called in the fair Katina. She was so lovely that I delighted to look upon her. In her general appearance, figure, and colour, she was not unlike Thierna; but she as far surpassed her in loveliness of form as the former was pre-eminent in the beauty of intellect. Her figure had the same supple roundness of contour; but it combined all the exquisite grace of the voluptuous East, where she was born and reared, her father having been a Russian exile, and her mother a Greek. Her complexion had the clear transpa-

rent delicacy of an infant's downy cheek, and the pink of the blush rose was not more fresh and tender: such colouring is rarely seen past infancy. Her long luxuriant hair, which had a shade more of red than Thierna, fell usually in half-platted, half-twisted masses down below her waist in the Eastern style. Her eyes—but how shall I venture to tell an European reader?—her eyes were pale sea-green. Yes, green; and they surpassed in loveliness every shade under the sun—that green which is seen produced where the Mediterranean kisses the rocks on the sandy shore or the sides of a vessel. They were not large, full, or bright, but long, almond-shaped, languishing, and exquisitely tender. The expression varied little; her face was no index of her soul; she wore a beautiful mask, which is, I have remarked, the case with most Eastern women. Whether they experience the same variety of emotion as more civilized women, I

will not at present prteend to analyze; but their countenances usually wear an imperturbable expression: on many there is a look of perpetual surprise, produced by the extreme arching of the eye-brows, which meet above the nose.

Katina was perfectly conscious of her beauty, and made a determined use of it to fascinate all she came near. She had few of the other sex to bestow her sweetness upon, and I fear the sisterhood were little better than desert air. Upon myself she lavished a power of witchery which would have turned the heads of half the male kind of my acquaintance, could they have been recipients of it; she also captivated Thierna, for whom she had conceived a sincere affection, and as the former often declared, she had such a loveable face, she could not resist kissing it. I had no doubt of the irresistible power of such beauty over the other sex. But on the breaking out of hostilities, when the embassy retired, she

had been left behind, the Propaganda gladly taking charge of her, in order to effect her conversion. But the girl's Greek blood was not so easily disposed of, and she had no more idea of religion than was attached to certain medals or talismans, by virtue of which she was to be preserved from certain evils, such as drowning, small-pox, or jaundice; of charity than was comprised in the serving out of soup at the prescribed time to a number of blind, lame, and decrepit, who came to fetch it. Of the intrinsic merits of virtue and truth she had an indefinite idea, but of beauty a vivid one, and worshipping it in her own sweet person. She hated the Propaganda in all its branches, and looked back with regret and affection to her old Greek home of tawdry splendour, and the Russian embassy, where still as a child she had been shown up for her beauty. Her only dower had been a large quantity of jewellery, which had no doubt acted as a strong

stimulus to her conversion, and which the holy mother had taken as her dotte, to the great grief of the fair convert, whose delight was to adorn her own idol. She had contrived to possess herself of a few diamond ornaments, which she put on surrepti tiously, when secure from the observation of the Propagandians. She spoke five languages fluently; was often made interpreter, and had taught Thierna Turkish and a smattering of Greek and Russian, which enabled the latter to get on amongst her patients, and transact the ordinary business with caïquejees and Russians.

Katina had imbibed her five languages with her mother's milk. Her father was Russian, her mother Greek, her nurse would be Armenian. Katina from her infancy had lisped all the tongues spoken round her, in common with all children born in Stamboul, which is Babel on a small scale; and if the experiment could have been tried, no doubt the children born

in Babel would have spoken all the tongues in one, and thus saved a great many foreign grammars. She consequently set no value upon her great acquirement, and made no use of it unless she was forced. Thierna, on the contrary, not being a child of Babel, had laboured hard for every word, and conquered those unearthly Turkish sounds and crack-jaw Russian only by determined perseverance and the absolute demands of her position; but thus toiled for, it had become to her a source of profit and advantage. And so it is with other things: the harvest which is worth the reaping has been worth sowing; that which is lightly earned is lightly prized: earnest labour is never in vain—good comes of it somewhere, and perhaps where we least expect it. But labour of any kind is a thing unknown to Eastern women; and Katina was happier while gazing at herself in a small mirror, which she carried for that purpose in her pocket, than in any

labour, mental or physical. Let not any young lady of modern May Fair be horrified at such inordinate vanity. Vanity is but a comparative sin, and was not punished with the loss of Paradise, for Eve admired her fair proportions in the stream which served her for a mirror, and retained her innocence. It is a natural consequence of being beautiful, or thinking one's self so, which amounts to the same—as natural as eating from appetite, or sleeping from drowsiness.

The Turkish woman, in which I include the Eastern women, never tires of the pleasure of viewing herself as often as she can by looking-glasses in every conceivable place: in her fan, the small coffee-tray, and even spoon-handle she has looking-glasses; in each small box and trinket of every description; she makes no scruple of how often she is reflected, or how long she finds pleasure in the pastime; she does not cast a sidelong glance at the mirror as she passes through the room, like our Western

beauty, or surreptitiously steal away to the toilette-glass just to make her hair tidy or to wash her hands, but in reality to take another peep at that sweet face; and it was such a pretty thing I don't wonder at it. But the Eastern woman needs no such excuse of hands to wash or hair to arrange; she lounges down on her heels right opposite a looking-glass, and stares at herself with unmitigated delight until she has smoked her chibouk, sipped her coffee, and goes to sleep. So Katina admired herself in her small mirror to her own perfect satisfaction, and only longed for another with whom to reciprocate these feelings. Let us not judge her too harshly, or measure too severely from our own bushel. A pious Mahomedan woman would suffer martyrdom ere she would uncover the tip of her nose to a strange man, whereas Christian lady-saints are only too happy to have the opportunity of an evening party to display a white neck and shoulders for public admiration.

CHAPTER V.

TOWARDS the close of the following day, as I was sealing up my letters for England, I heard a strange and most unusual sound outside my door. I rose, and opening it, I saw Thierna carefully holding in both hands a small restive yelling bundle: she looked the picture of perplexity.

'It will keep screaming! What do you suppose it can want?' she asked.

'Its mother,' I suggested. 'Where on earth have you picked up that child?'

Yah! yah! went the baby, writhing its little person and screwing its tiny mahogany-coloured face into the most painful contortions.

'Poor little thing!' screamed Thierna, trying to make herself heard above the squalls of the baby.

I saw at a glance that this was her first experience in babies, so I took the little thing from her, and hushed it a little.

'What is to be done?' said Thierna, looking in amazed consternation.

'Take it to its mother,' I replied.

'It has none now, poor wretched little mite! but me, for I have just bought it, and given a hundred and fifty piastres for it, from a Jewish woman, who is seized with the usual frenzy for tramping to Jerusalem. When this mania comes upon them they would sell their own souls to the Evil One, if he would pay down cash to gratify it. This wretched woman had met with our gentle-hearted Bernardine, and had threatened to sell her child to the Turks for a slave, unless she would buy it. Bernardine, you know, takes charge of all the miseries

of this quarter, and she has always some horrible case on hand, and comes to me for a little silver coin,—relief which I never can refuse, her tales are always so piteous.'

'Well, you certainly do the oddest things in the world,' said I.

'Odd!' she repeated; 'of course, odd enough, but how can I help it? Bernardine meets me in the corridor, with this Jewess gesticulating and trotting after her. You never meet Bernardine without some poor wretch bringing up the rear. She tells me the history. Some of the other sisters assemble, and suggest the infant being there and then baptized, in order that if the Turks do get it for a slave, its little soul may be saved. I feared its trial in this life would not be lightened by the performance of this religious ceremony. The mother herself, with the baby in one hand, and the other thrust out for the money, pushed the bargain, vehemently portraying its suffer-

ings as a slave with the Turks. Cyclops, too, began to interfere, and shook the keys at the Jewess, as a sign to depart. Cerberus uttered his growl of defiance, and we were just on the eve of an uproar, and poor Bernardine would have been disappointed in her benevolent designs. I felt in my pocket, and happened to find the sum required. The woman had possessed herself of it, consigned the child to me, before I had time to deliberate, and Cyclops lost no time in putting her outside the gates.'

'I never heard of such an eccentric purchase,' I observed.

'Oh, it is not so uncommon in Constantinople,' she replied. 'But I certainly never entertained the remotest idea of buying a baby; but there it is, and the real mother is on her way to Jerusalem, and the baby is mine. I suppose I must be its mother. I wish it was not such a little black mite. *Mon Dieu!* what will Cyril say?' she exclaimed.

This thought had already occurred to me; but she had but that moment stumbled over the idea, and was proportionately taken aback.

'If it was only white,' she said, hesitatingly. 'Poor little thing! having no father and an unnatural mother, he must take to it.'

'My dear Thierna,' I said, gravely, 'do not flatter yourself that if that sea-monster, or whatever you choose to call him, should become your husband, that he will tolerate black babies whose mothers are gone to Jericho. Now you have become possessor, you must provide for it in some other way. Besides, you cannot keep it, or take care of it yourself: it would die.'

'So Bernardine says; and she knows a poor woman who has just lost her own, and will take charge of it for the present. You know Sœur Bernardine—she is the best creature in the world; she runs me into all sorts of expense I never intend to perpetrate.

I see so much misery to relieve in the hospital that I could spend a fortune in chicken broth, jelly, and Bordeaux wine. When she comes with her eloquent tongue and her mild sympathetic eyes, I cannot resist. But I am rather angry with myself for having yielded to a pair of emerald earrings which she enticed me into buying for a Russian emigrée, for whom she had made a *mariage de convénance*. The girl would not submit to the hymeneal yoke until she had the trousseau complete with the earrings. Poor Bernardine was in a distressed state of mind. Metinka could not speak a word of anything but Russian. She had been brought over to Stamboul, with several hundred others, from the sacking of Kertch. They had been landed without a place to go to or any provision made for them; and but for the indefatigable labours of this Propagandian many would have died of hunger and exhaustion.

'Bernardine discovered some tumble-

down buildings which nobody owned some few miles away; of these she took possession, and as she spoke Russian fluently, she set all the men repairing them and the women cleaning. I lent her a few hundred piastres, which she has since repaid me, to buy food; and there is something marvellous in the manner in which by her sole exertions she achieved the work of lodging, feeding, and at length of employing from two to three hundred people thrown suddenly upon her hands. And so well did she organize her little world, that not even a child died, and very soon there will not be one on charity. She is the noblest character, and the cleverest woman in the Propaganda, and a lady by birth and education. She it is who has that sweet soprano voice you hear in the chapel, and who painted that Magdalene which you so much admire: her history is one of those deep tragedies of life, through which she has struggled like a star seen on a stormy night, more pure and

bright from the clouds which have beset it. There is just a trace of it left on her face, but she is always cheerful and gentle; her heart never could be filled with such deep compassion for all had she not loved and suffered deeply herself. She planned and arranged for all her little world. Matinka she thought to marry to the young Polè Stanislaus. The young couple entered warmly into the idea: a modest trousseau was provided for the bride elect. She evinced much satisfaction in reviewing the various articles of dress; but asked when the earrings were to be bought—emerald earrings, without which she could not, should not, would not, be married. In vain the good sister expostulated, the young lover appealed, and promised to save his pennies after marriage. It was to no purpose; without emerald earrings marriage was impossible to the Russian girl; and in this dilemma Bernardine came to me. We traversed the whole of the Turkish bazaar, in hopes

of finding some cheap trinket of glittering appearance, and small intrinsic value; but the Turk vends no spurious article, his gold is gold, and his emerald not green glass. So we had to buy the earrings, and Matinka was married in them, and is very happy. But now I see you have got it to sleep,' she said, looking at the baby which lay in my lap; 'I'll carry it to the nurse.' She took carefully hold of the four corners of the shawl in which it was wrapped, and walking on tiptoe, in much dread of its waking, she quitted the room.

I had expressed a wish to see the Russians of whom the whole world was talking, and had asked Thierna to be allowed to accompany her on one of her visits on board the Ponton, where the Russian prisoners were confined. Katina appeared with a message from her to say she was going that morning at eleven o'clock, and that the commander, to whom she had mentioned my wish, would be happy to see me.

'Ah!' said the girl, looking at me touchingly in the face, 'how happy you are to be able to go where you like, without asking any one! Whilst I would give the world to visit my dear countrymen' (and turn all their heads I thought); 'but they never allow me to go out, and I shall be shut up all my life, while others go freely abroad.'

'But surely you are not here on compulsion. Who obliges you to remain?' I asked.

'Oh! no one, but where can I go?—I, a poor orphan; and although I hate this place, whenever I am in presence of holy mother I cannot even bring myself to say how much I wish to go. I have an uncle in Russia, but since the war has broken out no communication can be held with him they tell me, and when peace comes it will be too late, for I shall then be a sister.'

'Why not tell the whole truth to the lady abbess. Surely she would not force you to become a nun.'

'No, but she would say how surprised she was to hear such sentiments, from one whom she had looked upon as so favoured of heaven, who had been given the grace o see the true light and the inestimaole blessing of a vocation; she would ask, was I not flying in the face of Providence, and resisting the ins irations of grace? had I not a holy calling? had not the voice of the Lord been made manifest? and by flying to a world of sin and pleasure, was I not rejecting all those special favours from on high?—and much more to the same purpose, which I cannot answer, and do not understand: all I know about it is that I am very miserable, and I want to get out, but never shall I now,' she concluded, looking languidly irresistible.

I kissed her blush-rose cheek, and resolved to consult with our sapient Thierna, whom I found waiting in the corridor.

'I must tell you,' she said, 'something about the gallant Captain Tudor, the mili-

tary commander of the Russian prisoners. He is, I believe, a descendant of the royal Tudors, and a right royal fellow he is in his way. His grandfather emigrated to Poland about the reign of Queen Anne, so he is one-third English and two-thirds Polish —a rather happy mixture of race, uniting British honesty to Polish chivalry, which is like putting a polish on a diamond. He stands six feet odd, I do not know how much; he has a large head, large features, large hands and feet, large proportions in every way; and he has a large heart to correspond, which we have found a large road into: we the sœurs command the Ponton. Whisper it not, but he is a terrible disciplinarian, and was very near shooting a poor wretch who had been foolish enough to try to escape by swimming. Until that day he hated the Propagandians, and often refused us admittance. On this occasion of our visit there was a great disturbance; the guard was turned out on deck, and the captain,

with cocked pistol in hand, was giving a last warning to the poor wretch, who was swimming for his life, that if he did not return he would fire upon him. It was a moment of terrible suspense. I could not bear to see the rigorous law carried into execution before my eyes. Sœur Bordislas, who was with me, covered her face in her hands, and prayed her favourite saint. She too was a Russian by birth; but our discipline taught her non-resistance. I am afraid I followed my nature, for I ran up the gangway just in time to strike up the pistol, which let off its contents somewhere in the direction of the minarets of San Sophia. This outrageous performance overawed the soft-hearted captain, and won his lasting admiration; indeed, I do not think he has ever thoroughly recovered his surprise.'

'And what is the secret of your influence over him?'

'Oh, it is no secret. I get my own way

about small matters concerning the prisoners —that is all: he is a great man, but has not as great a *will* as I have. The poor prisoner was brought back in one of the boats which put out after him; he was placed in irons in the cachot, from whence I delivered him next day. You will understand it all when you see him.'

'I think,' said I, 'all large clumsy men have great hearts, little sensitiveness, astuteness, or perception; great solid creatures with an immense capacity for affection, but little of the small artifices and delicate subtleties which usually win it. Cupid makes up to them in quantity for what he stints them in quality. Nine times out of ten if a maid have two lovers, one six feet odd and the other under six feet, (advantages mutual,) the lesser would win her; but it would be the reverse if he was too little or effeminate, for a woman is apt to despise all that too much resembles herself; from five feet eight to eleven is the

dangerous height, most wicked, most captivating, most intellectual, and most power.'

'And ought he to have broad shoulders?' remarked Thierna, smiling.

'Exactly so, and the ones you are thinking of exemplify my theory.'

'Here we are,' she said, as our caïque shot alongside the vast hulk of a dismantled three-decker. A very large stately man, with an English face and a foreign bearing, stepped to the ship's side, then drew himself up in great pomp, and received us in a grand chivalrous manner. His scarlet cap he held above his head; he wore a richly-embroidered white burnous and scarlet trousers, and looked altogether a worthy descendant of the royal Tudor. With a low bow he offered his hand to Thierna to assist her as she stepped on deck. She quietly declined without raising her eyes, and I profited by the intended civility. As she proceeded quietly to make us known, her hands folded in her large

sleeves, and looking the sedate sister to perfection, I read in his great honest face the secret of her power on the Ponton. She had brought a bale of common print, which she was about to cut up into pocket-handkerchiefs to be hemmed by the Russians (who sew as well as any women) for the use of the sick; and while she was thus engaged Captain Tudor escorted me over the ship, explaining and entertaining me to the best of his great power. The prisoners, as a whole, were intensely ugly men—raw-boned, angular, hard-featured, or rather odds and ends of features, as though Nature had made them up of scraps, and put them together in a hurry. They had a general unfinished appearance, and their muddy-coloured shapeless coats were no relief to their muddier complexions. They were obedient to command, and easily managed; quick with their fingers, sewing, tailoring, and making lint with great dexterity. The Prince Dors-

mansdoff sent monthly sums of money to the Propaganda to purchase small luxuries,—such as raki, sour krout, and tobacco. The introduction of the former Captain Tudor had long and strenuously resisted, but Thierna had finally carried the day; for raki, she said, to a Russian supplied the place of coffee to a Frenchman, and if not absolutely necessary to his existence, at least was indispensable to a genial and cheerful view of it. The raki forms part of the Russian soldier's rations; and to deprive him of it not only interferes with a long-established habit, which has become second nature, but he loses his staff of life — as bread is to the Englishman. The Russian bread is not by any means inviting, resembling in taste and appearance Irish bog turf.

When we had made the round of the prisoners, the commandant conducted me to his own cabin, or I should say tent, where he bivouacked during the day, and after inviting me to partake of some cool

fruit and iced cream, he took a seat opposite a looking-glass which, from its position, must have reflected the whole of the deck, covered by an awning, towards which his back was turned. I wondered what he was looking for among the Russian soldiers, or was it to see that all the handkerchiefs were cut up into proper squares? After discussing various matters touching the war, the state of the armies, the good honest soul ingenuously betrayed the truth. 'She is gone,' he said, confidentially, as though I had been a party to the surveillance through the mirror; 'she is gone between decks, and that will not satisfy her, she'll peep into the cachot and discover that I have got two rogues in irons; she will be up here like a shot, and then, parbleu, if he only saw her face, I'll defy the commander-in-chief himself to refuse the grâce she begs. In fact,' said he, deprecatingly, 'these Propagandians have usurped all authority here. I always hated all sister-

hoods, but these are irresistible. I am in despair, I do not know what to do,' he said, shrugging his shoulders. 'I hope she will not take a fancy to release all my prisoners loose on the town: I should be under the necessity of resigning my command.' I could scarcely restrain my inclination to titter as I pictured to myself the fairy-like figure of Thierna ruling supreme over this great bulky camp-hardened soldier. 'Do you not think,' he said, appealing to me, 'that it is a monstrous cruelty to shut up young girls in the sisterhood, to doom them to such a miserable existence as she must lead? All the delights of a woman's life are closed to her, and she finds but a sorry and dismal pleasure in succouring the woes of others.'

'But they take a holy pleasure in making others happy,' I replied; 'and you must have had many opportunities of testing how well they succeed.'

'True!' said he; 'she is like a ray of

sunshine to that blind fellow who can never see her; she warms his lonely heart, and the whole ship adore them.' (No doubt, I thought, including himself.) 'Yet why should she not be happy herself?'

'How do you know they are not happy?' said I, keeping prudently to the plural, for I had a vision of a row of tiny bright buttons on blue, tight-fitting shell-jacket, and they came in disagreeable contrast with that white cashmere embroidered burnous. There was a fine noble heart beating beneath its folds; and if Thierna had once raised her eyes, she might have observed it.

'I know she is not,' he answered, earnestly. 'I observe she is anxious, easily startled, almost careworn. She sees too much misery on board and in the hospitals for a young and tender heart to bear. She ought to be skipping about like a young fawn, and enjoying the sunshine of life, instead of creeping stealthily along in fear of disturbing the last moments of the dying,

or of beholding the dead look up from their slumbers. Why is all hushed in the presence of a corpse, as one asleep?'

'There are strong arguments on both the questions. In the first place, and to begin at the root, statistics prove that there are more women than men; and you surely would not introduce polygamy into European constitutions. Consequently, some women must remain unmatched. A lone woman is a lonely thing. They want an object. Sisters and brothers after marriage are not the same sisters and brothers they were before. Why should not the odd ones unite together for a mutual object? that object, a grand and benevolent one, of consoling the afflicted and succouring the destitute! We cannot shut out misery from the world; we have no right to blind ourselves to its existence, and turn away from its piteous cry. And if these women have no other duty or object to engross them, is it not more gene-

rous and noble to devote themselves to this than to their own special selfish enjoyment?'

The worthy captain was too heavy a substance to enter into nice subtleties of argument, or deep disquisitions on dry matters. He conveyed the idea of being too ponderous to be metaphysical. He was silent for a few minutes. Then applying my generalities individually to the object of his thoughts, he said:—

'But surely our dear Sœur Thierna is not shut up there because she can find no one to marry her? Ma foi!' he exclaimed, catching at a bright idea, 'if I thought'.... here he stopped short. So I continued his thought on my own account:—

'You would have fetched a priest, instantly ask me to be witness to the ceremony, which I should declare unconventional and irregular, and would assuredly turn out all wrong. For in the first place the priest, though a minister of God in his

own estimation and that of his congregation, as formerly with Presbyterians, might not for all that be considered as in holy orders and legally descended from the apostles—good for preaching, but not for marrying. And even though his ordination were in due apostolic succession, there might have been some flaw in the administration of the imposition of hands; he was perhaps not dubbed a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec. Then there would have been difficulties about natural right, international laws, and municipal laws, and "lex loci"—difficulties of religious ceremonies constituting legal rights, or ceremonies pour passer le temps. For instance, Captain Tudor might have entertained serious doubts about such a point as the resurrection of his individual body, whether his weighty person would ever become sufficiently rarefied to rise in the flesh, whilst Thierna might easily have pictured herself going up like a zephyr in fleecy white clouds. This

difference of opinion respecting a future state would have made a most material difference in their present position, and acted as a bar to a valid union. How many couples are not legally married, if they only knew it! I could within my own knowledge vouch for about sixty from the same accidental flaw. This is one of the cases where ignorance is bliss; and I should be sorry to disturb conjugal peace and equanimity by any inopportune revelations.'

I was therefore happy when at this juncture Thierna reappeared and spared me the necessity of declining to be a witness. The mighty captain heaved up from his seat like a couchant elephant packed by his keeper, his large face glowing with delight; the mere sight of her gave him a rush of blood to the head. Thierna stood before him in what she called pose official, viz. her eyes cast down and her hands folded in the wide sleeves. Her voice was soft and low as she said:—

'Monsieur le Capitaine, I am the bearer of an humble petition for mercy.'

The captain was in raptures on 'ma sœur.'

'Such prayer sits well on your lips' . . . .

He intended making a fine speech, but broke down at this point, finding his emotions overpowering his eloquence.

'Oh! release them, the rascals, release hem if you wish, ma sœur, and anything else you may think of pray name it. Perhaps you would like so many killogrammes of tobacco allowed on the feast of St. Stanislaus of Poland? or perhaps—'

'We thank you,' interrupted Thierna, speaking in the name of her order, and never moving a muscle of her face in gratitude for all these favours heaped upon her; and with the solemn sisterhood bow she withdrew.

The herculean victim to Cupid sat down in a state of flustered happiness. One look, or interchange of words, the power of conferring a favour asked by her, was a taste

of Paradise to him. The novelty was not the least of the charm. Reared up in camp and strife, his dealings had been all with his own sex. He knew little of woman but the remembrance of his mother. He was utterly bewitched and beside himself by the new and all powerful influence of a real and loveable woman. Like a man who drinks too deeply the first time of some powerful but healthy draught; his brain reels under its influence for a time, but soon recovers its natural tone and is invigorated by it. Alas! for the poor captain, that he could only have one draught at that source. Why could it not have been Katina who had boarded his 'Ponton?' He must have gone delirious about her. She as far surpassed Thierna in beauty as sunshine does a shower. Cupid ought to be indicted for not shooting the two victims with the same arrow in order to avoid all cross purposes. 'But hand in hand with sorrow love e'er is wont to go.'

After releasing her prisoners, Thierna returned and was ready to depart. I rose to take my leave, and Captain Tudor, with many polite speeches, hoped it would not be my last visit. Oh, deceitful is the heart of man! and it made me think that David was right when he said in his heart: 'Lo, all men are liars.' For the captain was only delighted to talk about his captivator, and cared no more for me than for the moon. We skimmed over the blue waters of the Bosphorus, through hundreds of vessels at anchor, bathed in golden light; the purple mountains rising on either side, dotted over with red-tiled kiosks and glistening white mosques, until we neared the dazzling white marble palace of the Sultan; shoals of porpoises were sunning their golden backs; all nature was harmonious. I was just observing to Thierna that man alone is discordant, when bang, bang,—boom, boom, roared a twenty-four pounder, and the caïque trembled in the water.

'What on earth is the meaning of that?' I exclaimed, my breath nearly gone with the shock.

'Only a salute; it is a man-of-war, with some great personage on board. I suppose when we get round the Point, we shall see.'

Round the Point sure enough we both saw and felt it, for we were nearly blown out of the water by the concussion. Bang! bang! went the artillery guns on one side, and the hills repeated boom! boom! Bang! roared the man-of-war, on the other side; it was like being in Pandemonium.

'Sheer off,' said Thierna, in Turkish.

'Yok!' replied the caïquejee, making the inexorable negative.

'Do tell him we shall be blown over. Why should he persist in running in between the fire?'

'Yok!' went the caïquejee, as he noticed me gesticulating.

'I wonder what is his reason,' said Thierna. 'They always have one, these

men; but they will never condescend to tell it. Oh, it is perhaps the current. Sometimes it is so strong that a two-oared caïque cannot make way against it, but is driven down to the Sea of Marmora. But, oh! look at the Sultan's windows,'—and Thierna burst out laughing.

I turned. We were nearly opposite the palace. With every bang, down went a shower of glass from the windows. Our gallant man-of-war, with some mighty hero on board, was humbly paying his devoirs to his celestial highness the Sultan, successor of Mahomet, and smashing all his new plate glass imported from England.

The salute over, and the smoke dispersed, man and nature, save the inhabitants of the Sultan's Palace, settled into placitude. My thought returned to the bit of romance I had just found out on the Ponton. Thierna sat with her hands pressed together, and a long, dreary, sad look cast towards the Black Sea. Not

looking for ships, I thought; her gaze went further than that, right over the Black Sea to the land on the other side; perhaps if her familiar fairy, as she was wont to denominate her messenger, could have traced her thoughts, they would have been detected in some trenches, or behind bastions, or peering under canvas tents, or rudely constructed mud huts. Cyril had built himself a hut—a very comfortable hole, when his tent had been blown away in a high wind, she knew that much. He was a genius, and could adapt himself to any circumstances; he was a philosopher too, and could be happy under any vicissitudes; and had not absented himself one day from his duties, while others, in precisely the same position, had perished miserably from cold, want, and exhaustion, and inaptitude to help themselves. Cyril had found or begged a large deep jar, into which he consigned all eatables, making a most savoury pot-pourri in lieu of the coarse ill-cooked rations.

He was a great sportsman, and shot and fished up every living thing good for man to eat. His foraging capacity was enormous; his larder was always well supplied, and he had the most friends, and was the most popular man in the corps. He constructed the most luxurious chair, or chaise-lounge, in camp, out of the hoops of a barrel and canvas; but when it was completed the small door of the hut refused it admittance, and part of the wall had to be taken down. In this he reposed after the fatigues of the trenches, while other officers camped up, or perched on three-legged stools, or roosted on the back of a chair without a seat.

Hundreds had been frozen during the severe winter from insufficiency of food, fuel, and clothing; and those frost-bitten patients had crowded the hospitals more than any patient suffering either from fever, cholera, or the shots of the enemy; frost-bite was more trying both to the patient and nurse

than any other malady. Cyril had never even suffered from cold; he had rolled a twelve-pound shot into the cooking fire, and when it smouldered, picked out his hot shot and placed it in his bed, and slept snug and warm until called to duty, whilst others, less ingenious, passed sleepless nights in the vain efforts to rub a little warmth into their freezing extremities.

As we skimmed swiftly along to Babek-dère, which I longed to see, on account of its renowned beauty, and where a troop-ship had just cast anchor, a shade of deep melancholy had fallen over my companion. That settled far-off gaze told the subject of her thoughts.

'What do you see? what is it?' I said, rousing her from her reverie.

'A weight of woe upon my soul; it will not hence,' she replied, with that vague mysterious look, which often made me fancy a fearful doom in store for her. 'Something has happened to him,' she continued, after a pause.

I could not help smiling at the serious way in which she told me this, and rallied her upon her superstition.

'You believe then either in presentiments, dreams, or clairvoyance.'

'I cannot explain any of the phenomena you allude to; but I do believe in some yet unexplained affinity existing between two people who have an unaccountable influence, and spiritual power over each other. I think there is some connexion between mind and mind, which has not yet been defined by any abstract theory. There may be a perceptive faculty yet undiscovered, or rather unnamed; for, like dreams, it has been known and felt from the beginning of the world, but never thoroughly analyzed. In fact those abstruse reasoning minds, who have attempted to fathom these mysterious depths of nature, have usually been burnt as witches or as possessed by the evil one; but from all ages there have been records of individuals seeing without the physical organs

of sight, and of pre-knowledge. Call it inspiration, or witchcraft, possession, or whatever you choose, it has an existence, and proclaims another faculty of a higher and more spiritualized character than we have yet been able to classify. You may trace it back from the witch of Endor and the Egyptian oracles down to Mesmer and our own Drs. Gregory and Elliotson. The same gleam of this truth has been caught; and I think that in this century of magical discoveries, this awful soul-secret which so many feel but few define, may yet be elucidated and printed in school-books. Such gigantic steps have been taken in omnipresence, and the levelling and annihilation of time and space, that omniseeing—if I may coin such a word—will not lag far behind. The less finite becomes the aspiration and knowledge of man, the nearer he approaches the Omnipotent. The great discoverers of truth and nature are God's pioneers of the world.

'I agree with you in most of your theory; but your practice does not carry it out. Have you not frequently and confidently assured me, that neither my husband nor your fiancée were to be shot in this campaign, but that that handsome young man you pointed out to me would be? Strange to say, I actually place faith in your prophecy.'

'Oh, Cyril is not shot, and he is not ill,' she answered hurriedly; 'but—but—' her lips quivered, she pressed them tightly together, and remained silent.

Arrived in the lovely bay of Babekdère, it was agreed that Thierna was to be put on board, and the caïquejee was then to row me round to the various coup d'œils. As we dropped alongside the troop-ship, the captain came down the gangway with true French politeness, and welcomed Thierna whom he immediately recognized.

'I am enchanted to see you, ma sœur,' he said, assisting her from the caïque.

'We need your kind offices much. You are accustomed to painful sights; but this is more so than usual. Not a man left with a hair on his head or face, and as black as cinders. There has been a frightful explosion of the gunpowder sheds.'

'Ha!' exclaimed Thierna, as a spasmodic movement shot through her whole frame; 'that is it!' and her eyes turned to me with an awful expression.

'Where, oh, where did it take place?' said I. 'My husband is in camp.'

'Is Madame's husband a French General? if so,' naming the name, 'he acted with great gallantry, and is quite safe; but a young English officer, who gallantly climbed up and threw a wet tarpauling over the top of the mill at the time of the explosion of the sheds all around him was blown literally away, Madame; nothing left of him, and nothing since discovered, but a blue foraging cap: these English gentlemen have, mon Dieu! le courage du diable!'

To say that the colour had fled from Thierna's face, would only half express the livid ghastly hue that overspread it; the lips blue and compressed, like one suddenly seized with cholera.

'Do you know his name?' I said, thinking that a reality could not surpass her horrible fears.

The captain hesitated, struck his hand to his forehead, and jerked his little dapper person to and fro.

'Was it Etherington?' I suggested, losing all patience and prudence at one and the same time.

'Comment? how do you call it?'

I repeated the name.

'Ah! si, si, Eddearington, that is the name; no doubt so brave a man was known to Madame.'

Thierna waited to hear no more; she clutched the gangway, and mounted slowly step by step, swaying about as one bearing a heavy burden. I bowed to the captain, who

skipped up after her, no doubt wasting a thousand polite remarks on the desert air.

The caïquejee pushed off, but I had no heart to enjoy even that lovely scene. It may be a peculiar idea of my own, but I always fancy inanimate objects sympathise with us in our joys and sorrows. I pictured to myself those broad powerful shoulders laid low, and the fine manly face cold and still, with the drooping figure of Thierna bending like a weeping-willow over him.

The whole bay of Bebekdère assumed a melancholy aspect, and presented a solemn theatre for the tragic dramatis personæ of my thoughts. The night was closing in, and the crescent moon was peopling with ghosts the cypress cemetery of Scutari, ere we returned to the Casa Madre. As we floated along in the moonlight, every stroke of the oar splashing up showers of liquid silver, my heart ached for my companion, who sat in the deep apathy of strong grief, unbroken by a sound, which in its

solemn stillness was more terrible than the most frantic weeping. I endeavoured to break this oppressive silence by suggestions of vague hope. She heeded, or heard me not. Suddenly the eyes dilated. 'He is not dead!' she whispered in an unearthly tone, then extending her hands, she muttered, 'Cyril! Cyril!' and fell heavily forwards. 'Mashallah!' muttered the caïquejee, disturbed for an instant from his stoical composure, then resumed his oars.

'Thierna, my poor child,' I said, raising her in my arms. I thought she had fainted; but instantly recovering herself, she said; 'I am quite well, thank you. I felt giddy, and as though everything was turning round.'

On our arrival, I made her go to bed, or rather lie down on the gridiron, after which I went to my birdcage and wrote a hasty letter to my husband, begging him if possible to telegraph to me if Captain Etherington was alive or dead.

The following days passed anxiously enough to me. What they were to her I could only guess, for she spoke no word; her lips were rigidly closed, and her face wore the same livid look which had passed over it on the gangway. Until I had heard from my husband, I could find no word to speak of comfort or resignation. I pressed her hand, which was chill as death, when we met by accident, but no word passed between us. At night I observed she was not in her cell; and meeting Sœur Bernardine, I made inquiry.

'Sœur Thierna has taken the night-watch in the Kadi Keyne hospital, where two sisters have fallen ill with typhoid.'

'Then who has taken her place in the day on the ships?' I inquired.

'She is doing both; there is no one to replace her; we have lost so many sisters lately.'

'But this is quite shocking,' said I; 'she is really not able for such arduous duty.'

'True,' answered Bernardine, with her sweet smile; 'Thierna is looking very ill; she cannot last long—she will go to a happier world, and reap the reward of her labours. Ah, Madame! if we only viewed death in the true light, it is the blessed harbinger of peace. This world is so full of sin and sorrow, our griefs so many and our joys so few, the battle of life so hard to fight; the pass to the Elysian field so narrow, steep, and tortuous, with a cross fire over our head, bristling bayonets before, and disgrace behind. Why should we not rejoice when that struggle is over—when the great bugle sounds a truce?'

'But Thierna is so young; the world as yet is bright and fresh to her.'

'The better she should leave it so, her own duty done. Better to die in her innocence,' said Bernardine, with a long pent-up sigh, 'than live to realize the wickedness and treachery of this life; to outlive all her bright happy hopes, to see her idols

broken and fallen from their pedestal, to see that all is but vanity—her heart's purest affection neglected, her earnest trust betrayed, her treasures turn to dross, and her own soul to despair. Those who live the longest, know the most of care, and God is merciful and kind when he gathers the young rosebuds in the early spring.'

As I parted from Bernardine, who was a model of every earthly virtue, I reflected how much she must have suffered, ere she could have become so thoroughly detached from this life, while still fulfilling all its duties. For it is sorrow, not joy, which makes us look forward to a better land, and detaches the heart from the things of earth.

Four days had elapsed, and no tidings of the lost Cyril. I had ventured a second time that day to the office, and was returning sad and dispirited, my eyes cast on the ground, when a pair of red legs loomed in the distance. I looked up to see the portentous form of Captain Tudor making

towards me. On meeting, he shook me cordially by the hand, as though we had been old friends. I felt certain he wanted to know something, and that his object in offering me his escort was not exclusively to be allowed to see me safe through the canaille which crowded the streets of Stamboul; and being accepted, he coughed, hesitated, thought it was a fine day; then, being no diplomatist, floundered right on the point uppermost in his mind. Had I seen Thierna? She was ill!—she was dying!—he knew it; there was an awful change in her within the last three days; she had actually sat down in his cabin, taken a glass of water from his hand—she was not like herself.

'I know she is ill,' I remarked; 'but she is not laid up, and I hope will soon be better.'

'She never will be laid up,' he replied; 'she will die at her post, as I have seen men drop dead out of the rank, from whom a murmur had never escaped. She could

scarcely stand yesterday; she allowed me to help her into the boat, and her hand was cold as ice. She is killing herself with overwork, toiling in these hospitals. Is there no one to save her? is she to be sacrificed in this way?—it is too dreadful,' said the great man, whose voice had become husky with deep emotion.

'Let us not anticipate the worst,' I replied; 'she has been over-exerting herself lately; but it is not that.'

'What is it, then?' he said, suddenly facing round upon me, and looking me steadily in the face.

Under that earnest gaze, I felt myself colouring violently, for I was conscious of having said one word too much. To tell him that Thierna's heart was breaking for the loss of one she loved so wildly, while he, honest man, was wrung with anxiety for her, was a malicious piece of cruelty on the part of Dame Fortune I had not heart to be an accessory to.

But my silence was ominous to him. He doubted my sympathy for Thierna. A real grief was distinctly marked on his large face, as I assured him in parting that I would take every care in my power of her.

That night I was restless, and disturbed with frightful dreams, in which my husband, Thierna, Cyril, and Captain Tudor were alternately changing identity, and finally they were all drowned from the foundering of the Ponton.

I awoke from this nightmare in a great state of fright and heat, and dared not close my eyes again. I arose and went up to the terrace. The Angelus bell was ringing. I thought I should be in time for the first mass in the chapel of Maria Stella at half-past four. The chapel-door was closed, and I walked on towards the cell, and was no little shocked to hear a wild burst of laughter coming from it.

Hastily pushing open the jalouse, I be-

held Thierna curled up on the corner of the divan, all dressed but her veil and coif, rolling her head against the wall, her eyes unnaturally brilliant, her lips parched and dark, and the face fearfully altered. She was talking fast and incoherently to herself, tearing her veil into very small pieces, as though making charpie.

I took her hand: it was burning hot; she did not recognize me. 'There is no water,' she said, in that supernatural tone peculiar to delirium; 'the wells are all poisoned: we must drink blood! Cyril,' she said, throwing her arms round me, 'he is burnt as black as a cinder; keep away, keep off, he will bite.' She went on, thrusting me from her: 'he has no mouth, it was blown away; I had to feed him with the tuyan, and when I put my lips so close to his bleeding throat, he bit me, and I am mad. Fly from me: it is hydrophobia!' and again she laughed an unearthly sound.

Distressed beyond measure, I ran to seek

help, taking the shortest cut to the Pharmacie. At the door of that department I met the sister who had charge of it, and to her I hurriedly communicated the painful intelligence.

'Taken the fever,' said the sister, calmly; 'how long has she been ill?'

Her immovability irritated me; 'I have found her this moment delirious,' I replied.

'Thank you,' she said: 'I will make her a composing draught, and if she is sufficiently ill, she must be removed to the Infirmary.'

'Pray do not delay,' I urged.

'I have only three potions to make up on my list before hers,' she said; 'she will have it in her turn.'

As I flew back to the cell, I could not help wondering if the sight of misery had so hardened her, or if it was a natural ossification of the heart. On after reflection, I was of the latter opinion. She had sharp, cold, black, beadlike eyes, that looked as

though they had never seen a summer, but gazed always on the cold bitterness of winter. To such eyes, I am of opinion, soft hearts do not belong. Sœur Mart, that was her name, presently made her appearance in the cell with the draught, placing it upon the table. She took one of the burning hands of the patient, felt the pulse carefully, opened the mouth, looked at the tongue, then turning round for the potion, quietly remarked, 'fièvre cérébral;' she then took out of her pocket a couple of strong bandages; one she tied round Thierna's waist, and slipped the second through the first, fastened it to the divan.

'Voilà,' she said, 'she will take no harm now, and I will send a stretcher in the course of the day to carry her to the Infirmary. Madame need not trouble herself.'

'For heaven's sake do not take her there!' I exclaimed: 'she is sure to die there!'

'Si c'est la volonté du bon Dieu,' re-

plied the sister; 'we must all die; but she cannot remain here; it is too far to send her medicine, and she would disturb the devotions in the chapel. . Je vous salut, Madame,' and she retired.

I was too vexed to speak; but I resolved to oppose her by every means in my power, and save Thierna from the Infirmary, if possible.

As she appeared a little more tranquil, I was about to slip down to my room to fetch a pillow, for the poor divan did not boast one. Opening the door, I fell over Katina, who must have been listening there; she coloured very much.

'Sœur Thierna is ill,' she said, 'lowering her soft green eyes to the ground; 'I thought Sœur Mart was there, and dared not come in.'

She volunteered to fetch the pillow: on her return she sat down on the floor by the bedside, caressing the small hand between her own.

'Ah, Madame,' she said, 'if you knew how kind she has been to me; and now I have no one left in the world, for she must die; they will take her to the Infirmary, and that will be the end: for none but the strong ones ever come out of that place, and she is so delicate, she will not ever rally; it is all over!' And Katina burst into a flood of tears, and looked, as she well knew, marvellously beautiful.

'I intend to keep her out of the Infirmary, if I possibly can,' I remarked.

'Oh!' she said, clasping her hands, and fixing upon me her most bewitching gaze, 'save her, chère Madame! You English are so good and so powerful,' said the young flatterer, 'and Madame has only to decide upon it, and it will be done: for the Sainte Vierge herself has a special protection for the English.'

I could not forbear a smile at this small piece of hypocrisy, but replied, that I wished that I could think of any feasible

plan. Katina was silent for a few moments, then resumed, half-timidly, half-coaxingly, 'If Madame were to see holy mother, and beg as a favour to herself, *notre mère* could refuse her nothing; and if Madame told her she wished to make a vow to the Madonna of a new golden crown (it need only be plated, said the girl archly) when Thierna recovers, I am sure she would obtain permission for Thierna to remain here. I would do everything for her, and carry everything from the Infirmary she required.'

Struck with the soundness of this advice, and vividly contrasting the advantages of conciliation over opposition, I resolved to adopt it. Katina placed pen and paper before me in order to write a note, begging an interview with the honoured Lady Abbess, which, when penned, she ran to deliver, evidently fearful I should change my mind about the silver-gilt crown. A polite answer in the affirmative presently

arrived, and I went to my birdcage to make my most elaborate toilet, during which Katina, who was taking charge of the patient, came running down anxiously solicitous to adornme with all th e ornaments in my bijou case: for this was a great state visit, and she obviously wished to produce a great impression upon the reverend mother.

I was admitted to her presence by her secretary, and, as usual, met with a most gracious reception.

The Lady Abbess was a small dark-eyed woman of about fifty; her face was expressive of keen perception and shrewdness, over which was thrown a very thin coating of bland suavity and humility, without the mask; she was a clever, decided, penetrating woman. She was seated in a large easy chair before a half-circular table, which was so covered with papers that she looked almost buried in them.

The sister-secretary placed a chair for me near her, and retired. The lady mother

opened the conversation by trusting I was comfortable, and had everything I required. In reply, I told her a fib, and said I had, although, in reality, I was as wretchedly uncomfortable as a woman can be in a birdcage. She then proceeded with a glowing panegyric upon my piety and charity, and that of the English in general. 'Ah,' she said, enthusiastically, 'if the English were only converted, I think,' she said, 'their country would be called the land of saints.'

I knew she was not thinking of England, but what special business brought me there, and speculating what the amount of my donation would be, as I never could leave her without making some offering.

I proceeded at once to the subject of my visit. She expressed herself much concerned about Thierna.

'We cannot afford to lose her,' she said; 'she is full of energy and devotion to the cause, and possesses so much tact and ingenuity.'

'I propose to take her into my cage.'

'True,' she replied, 'she will have more air and quiet than in the Infirmary, and I will appoint a sister to attend her.'

I suggested Katina, and it was so settled. I deposited my offering for crowns, candlesticks, or whatever she chose to apply it to, and with many polite speeches from the all-powerful little lady, I took my leave.

After disrobing, with the aid of Katina and Bernardine, we carried the patient to my room. Her low moaning was most piteous; Bernardine thought the doctor ought to see her immediately.

'He will not return until late this evening: he has already been his round,' said Katina, and she pulled my sleeve, looking meaningly towards Bernardine, who was stooping over the bed; 'get another doctor' (sotto voce).

I immediately took the hint: 'I should like an English doctor to see her; there is

a friend of mine who is very clever, and would understand her constitution.'

'Certainly,' said Bernardine, 'and there is no time for delay.'

'And reverend mother would not object—if asked?'

'Bring him up by the dark stair behind the store-room,' she said, turning to Katina, 'and there can be no objection: you have a carte-blanche from holy mother.'

Three minutes after I was passing through the vestibule, on my way to seek for Dr. N. Ere reaching the great gate I heard Cyclops declaiming, as usual, that she was there to open and shut the door, and not to answer inquiries how all the patients in the hospital were progressing. Cerberus joined in this speech with a ferocious growl.

'*Ma foi!* if you do not call that dog off, I will pin him to the earth with my sword,' said Captain Tudor, for it was he who had raised the storm. The good man was red

in the face with indignation and mortification: his anxiety for Thierna had led him to make inquiries to so little purpose. I told him the state of affairs, and my wants and requirements, in the shape of Dr. N— and a supply of ice. He assured me, if I would honour him with the commission, that I should have both wants supplied in the space of half an hour. Scarcely waiting for my answer, he departed, glowing with importance, and the relief afforded by doing something and feeling himself of some use.

The great man would have freely given his great hand that moment to have saved that poor, suffering, frail little body which lay moaning on my bed. The Doctor and the ice were ushered to my room by Katina. He examined his patient carefully, attentively: took up the little hand, shook his head, said between his teeth, 'pressure on the brain: any sudden shock?—highly nervous temperament; over fatigue, no

stamina! Look at that bone,' taking the tiny wrist between his finger and thumb, and letting it fall: 'too frail by half for such work; save her this time, must not do it again.'

He wrote out a prescription, gave clear and minute directions, which, if strictly carried out would save her this time, promising to call early the next morning.

The night passed, as only can be conceived by those who have sat through the long hours with an unconscious or delirious patient. There is not to me a sadder sight than to behold the human body still palpitating with life, while the soul is gone or dormant.

As I sat by the bedside, where that delicate form lay writhing and tossing to and fro, I could not help speculating whether the bright spirit had really fled, and left the body only a mass of animal matter.

But the Doctor had said he would save

her, and his potent drugs were already taking effect. Where, then, was the soul, or in what state during this period of unconsciousness and apparent annihilation, was a deep mystery I could not solve, and which I leave to metaphysicians.

The excitement of the day had effaced from my mind all thought of the ill-fated Captain Etherington, and the telegraphic message. How everything goes by comparison in this world! The all-important event of the village is eclipsed by the great news from the neighbouring town; our anxieties of to-day, which we imagine nothing can be greater, sink into insignificance before an awful calamity of to-morrow: we are prone to think the present sorrow the greatest and the bitterest that ever was invented for poor humanity to endure. As a steep hill, in a flat country, enjoys the reputation of a mountain, for want of comparison, so those who have the fewest and smallest trials usually make the

most of them, and believe them the heaviest, only from want of contrast.

Katina sat on the floor in the easy posture peculiar to Eastern women; her long green eyes as wide open as they would come, for the heavy, dreamy lids never lost their almond-shaped contour, her fair long hair flowing loose over her shoulders; my small toilet-glass in her hand, she grew, to my fancy, a perfect personification of a beautiful syren—a mermaid. She could not be persuaded to take one half-hour's sleep, but amused herself by plaiting and twisting her long tresses and making fanciful head-dresses before the glass, from which her eye wandered alternately to the sick bed: two thoughts occupied and divided the young girl's soul—admiration for her own beauty, and anxiety for her friend.

In a short time she propelled herself, without rising from the ground, towards me, and approaching her head, whispered, 'Captain Tudor was walking outside last

night until late: I saw him until it was quite dark.'

'Where in the world did you see him?' said I, much surprised.

The green eyes closed with a languid delight, and the rosebud mouth dilated into a soft smile.

'Madame would not speak of it to any of the sisters?' was her hesitating rejoinder.

I promised inviolate secrecy.

'There is a little open trellis window in one of the empty store-rooms, where no one ever goes, and through that I can see into the street. If he should be there to-morrow, has Madame any commission for him? I could throw a little note down to him.'

'But, my dear, you would get into great disgrace for such a proceeding. Does he know you are up there?'

'Oh, yes,' she said, blushing deeply; 'he always looks up.'

I felt considerably alarmed by this com-

munication, and begged Katina not to hold any converse through the window, adding that 'holy mother would never pardon such a transgression.'

'Reverend mother can never know,' was her eager reply, 'if Madame does not tell.

Katina was obviously more impressed with the importance of what I have heard designated the eleventh commandment: 'Thou shalt not be caught,' than any other.

'Captain Tudor would not tell: he is so good and so handsome: does not Madame think so? and wears such a beautiful burnous.'

Poor Katina! was the mischievous little god at work even here? Did she imagine, simple child, that the burly captain was a victim to her syren eyes and mermaid locks, nor dream of a rival in the wan little face half-enveloped in ice on the pillow; nor could she suspect him of such bad taste? Was she not fifty times lovelier than her companion? She had yet to learn that where

the barbed arrow strikes it blinds the victim to all reality, and in lieu decks the object in couleur de rose, or how otherwise could the girl have discerned such beauty in the colossal form of the captain?

Early in the morning, having received more hope from the doctor's visit, I dismissed Katina to take a little repose.

Shortly after I received a summons to the parlour. I found Captain Tudor waiting there, looking very much as though he had passed a sleepless night.

'Has Madame commands for me?' he asked, with a profound military salute.

'Thank you, none this morning,' I replied; 'we have plenty of ice. I have seen the doctor—most excellent man; he entertains much hope of our sister.'

'And if she is spared this time, Madame must see the absolute necessity of removing her from this place, in order that her life may not pay the sacrifice.'

I was silent; I knew not how to reply.

Cyril and the telegraphic message occurred to me. If he was really dead, why should not Thierna confide her happiness to this warm-hearted, honest man? He would have turned Pagan at once, and worshipped her to his last breath.

With her enthusiastic love for the gallant hero of the terrace, I was not astonished at her disregard, or indifference to her less dashing admirer. That she guessed his sentiments I felt sure, from her very prim, and to her unnatural, manner towards him; still, she was too sensible not to appreciate his honest affection, and possibly return it, when the dazzling infatuation of the first romantic love had subsided.

I resolved, therefore, to give the Anglo-Pole the chance of being the bearer of his own fate, and send him to fetch the telegraphic message.

Overcome with the night's watching, and less anxious about Thierna, I was awakened from a doze by Katina, who appeared with

the message. In passing through the vestibule, she had met and received it from Captain Tudor.

I strongly suspected the sly pussy had been at her post of observation again; she looked lovely enough to have won the hearts of a regiment of Janissaries, much more of one solitary Pole; and this sentiment of self-satisfaction was plainly visible in her whole demeanour.

I tore open the letter: Captain Etherington, a very dashing officer, my husband said, was alive, though fears had been entertained that he had been blown from the top of the windmill during an explosion, whilst placing a wet tarpauling; but these fears were unfounded—he had merely been buried alive, and was now disinterred.

Here was a final blow to the dreams of the commander of the Ponton; and I considered his insensibility to the attractions of the fair Russian (whom I had no doubt had cast her most languishing and bewitching

glances upon him) as nothing less than mere perversity; the stupid man remained as provokingly unconscious of these allurements, as though she had stared at him through two bits of green glass. This was really tantalizing to a lover of match-making, as I must confess myself to be.

There were many beautiful traits in the girl's character, of which her devotion and sincerity to Thierna were the most striking; and although she kept faith with no one else, yet with her she was true and simple; and I could not help thinking that her education, and the system under which she lived, had much to do with her duplicity.

'I never deceived Thierna in my life,' she told me, with much naïveté, 'because she has never scandalized and always encourages me to what is good. It is no use telling the truth to Sœur Gabrielle, under whose authority I am, because she always sees I have not been sufficiently mortified,

or acted from a pure love of God and obedience to my superiors.'

Of truth in the abstract, Katina's Greek nature had little conception: so far as it was useful and pleasant she adopted it; but to maintain it at a sacrifice, was a higher standard than she was at all accustomed to contemplate.

Thierna's recovery was slow and lingering. From day to day I watched to tell her the good news of the telegraphic message; as I feared, in her weak state, that excessive joy might have as baneful an effect as grief. She never once alluded to the subject, but talked of the time when she would return to her patients.

During her convalescence she gave me the history of her former life; which, though related at various intervals, I shall here narrate consecutively.

'You never do anything like other people, has been the reproach of my life,' said Thierna. 'My earliest recollections

are strewed and vexed with the epithets eccentric, odd, strange, original, which holds the place of a substantive, and but a second-cousin relationship to the English adjective, original, primitive, unique; "une originale" dubs a person as queer, and is most frequently employed to define English character. This idiosyncracy in me has often been the subject of my most serious and anxious investigation, for in order to cope with any effect we must first ascertain the cause; and I have long arrived at the conclusion, so frequently suggested by French people, that it consisted in *le sang Anglaise*, transplanted on to a French soil, and my English nature was always breaking through my French habits.

'The English are a nation of originals, say our neighbours; they are dissimilar to many other nations, obviously from their insular position in the world, but they are unlike each other. Every other country has a national seal with which she stamps

all her children, but an Englishman carries his own seal and stamps himself whatever he chooses to represent; and a foreigner can only decide what countryman he is by first defining what he is not, consequently if not such and such a thing, ergo he must be an Englishman, though he bears no one feature of resemblance to any other John Bull then on record. This may explain why English are invariably interesting to foreigners, because each individual offers a totally new phase of character from his previously studied compatriot. Perhaps no other nation under the sun offers the boundless variety of character and individuality of eccentric ramifications as the English.

'When journeying through the desert we met a solitary horseman; the horse was stamped by its native soil clear as day—Arabia—but the rider might have been an inhabitant of Mercury from any sign of nationality we could detect. He was not an Arab, for his nose was not long enough,

though he wore the inseparable white cloak and cowl. He was not a Turk, for he was not fat enough (all Turks are corpulent who ride on horseback), though his turban, long beard, and total absence of hair gave him somewhat the appearance of one; nor Chinese, for he had no tail, though his eyes were a little oblique, as though Dame Nature had made a slip downwards with her scissors when cutting his eye-holes, as ladies often do in cutting button-holes. He was not French, or he would not have been there alone—Frenchmen detest solitude—though he had on French boots. He was not Italian, because he had a seat in his saddle, which looked as though he intended to remain there. He was not German for some other reason. We all recalled some fifteen or twenty different national indices. Finding he was none of these, we decided to hail him in English, though he looked no more like an Englishman than a chimpanzee; but he responded cheerfully,

joined us, and turned out to be Mr. Jones, a great naturalist.

'Therefore, brought up by French people, I was soon stigmatized as *originale*, and you know I have experienced the truth of the axiom, which applies to Christians as well as dogs: "Turn a dog out with a bad name," etc., etc., has a great deal to do with it.

'I am the grandchild of a most extraordinary marriage. My grandfather was a roving Englishman, resembling, no doubt, in many respects our chimpanzee friend of the desert. Being in Paris at the time of the Reign of Terror (exactly where none but an Englishman would have been from choice), the idea occurred to him to visit the Bastille. This project was not easy of realization, as suspicion was the order of the day; but, meeting with opposition, my grandfather worked at his project as though his well-being or future fate had depended upon its accomplishment, which in reality

it did, although the guiding hand of Providence was then to him invisible.

'How often is a straw wafted by the wind the turning-point of our destiny! As a stone cast into the water causes a ripple on the most distant shore, so the most trivial events of our lives, after a thousand ramifications, lead on to some great climax.'

'Yes,' I remarked, 'for I knew a pretty, gentle girl whose life happiness was cut short entirely from not finding a cottage with ivy growing over it; and I will tell you the story, both to exemplify your theory, and as a warning never to leave your husband, if ever you have one. Men are not to be trusted.

'My heroine had run away with a gay young officer, with nothing but his epaulettes, his pay, and his debts. She was of high family, who cut her off with only a small fortune from their tender regards; however, they had sufficient to make them happy, but for the unlucky idea of ivy.

'To take his pretty wife to barracks was out of the question; to keep her in an establishment like the one she had abandoned for him was equally impossible; lodgings were uncomfortable, and not to be tolerated for long. But a sweet little picturesque cottage in the country, a few miles from the town in which he was quartered, was a delightful compromise between "pride and poverty."

'"A cottage with ivy growing all over, dear Alfred, we should be so happy in," suggested the young bride. A cottage with ivy was sought for near and far; Alfred was bitten with the ivy mania, and nothing else would do: straight-walled cottages looked mean and poor, but ivy was respectable and romantic. *En attendant,* the landlady was impertinent. It was arranged that the young wife was to go on a long visit in the country, where Alfred was to run down by rail every few days—it was only one hundred and fifty miles distant—until he had found the cottage.

'Unfortunately in his researches he found, —not the ivy cottage, but a gay, wealthy widow, who straightway became enamoured of his handsome whiskers, and conceived the idea of monopolizing them to herself, by relieving him of his difficulties, and transferring his debts from his creditors to her own account.

'Once the rein in her own hand, Alfred became her *cavalier servente*. Was there ever any mischief in the world, that a rich widow was not at the bottom of it?

'Kind friends made the most of it to the young wife, who turned her gentle face to the wall, broke her heart, and never looked up again, as the saying is; which means, she left off crinoline and all her pretty bows and bonnets; wore a long grey dress and cloak, walked six miles to teach a Sunday-school, where she took a bad cold, which settled in her throat, and she died, as report said, of a broken heart; although Alfred did come when sent for,

and bitterly repented, of course, and three months afterwards sold out, and duly married the widow, who could not wait or trust herself: that is the end of my story.'

'And now tell me what happened to your grandfather in the Bastille.'

'My grandfather,' continued Thierna, 'after contemplating every form of misery, beheld it in that of a beautiful girl—the young Comtesse de Monperier, who was detained there for no other reason, than that of being the daughter of her father, whom the guillotine had made headless, and which fate was also to be hers. She knelt, her drooping head leaning for support against the prison wall, in mute but awful anticipation of her approaching dissolution.

'My grandfather's eyes fell on the slender white throat, which had barely seen fifteen summers, and his English sang froid gave way. He pictured it headless as it would appear in a few days, or perhaps hours; the

most noble impulse of his life took possession of him, he resolved to save that innocent child at the peril of his own life.

'He turned to the jailer, whose rough face was, for the moment, expressing a shade of compassion. My grandfather at once resolved to enlist him as an ally, and, pretending to be struck with the girl's beauty, expressed a wish to save her. "Monsieur is English," said the man, "why can he not marry her? she will then be naturalized English, and the republic will give her up to monsieur." My grandfather had little anticipation of such a felicitous mode of carrying out his project; but before twelve hours were over, a French notary and *juge de paix* had entered the most ill-spelt and garbled name of Gilbert Saxelhurst, Esq., of Saxelhurst Castle, Yorkshire, and Marie Thérèse de Monperier, united in marriage, in presence, etc. etc., with two turnkeys no doubt for witnesses; and I think,' continued Thierna, 'that this is as

powerful an exemplification of the results of a mere whim as your ivy story.

'My parents died while I was still quite a child; and my earliest recollections are of a French convent, where I was made a great pet of. It was a very different establishment from this; for they were cloistered nuns, who took vows never to put their feet over the enclosure, or admit any stranger.

'It was a self-contained building, a little world in itself, turning upon its own axis independently and in total oblivion of the outer world: it was hemmed in by the massive ramparts of a very old French town.

'There was a large porte cochère, which rarely opened but to receive a new inmate, or carry out a dead one; for in the Carthusians we did not bury our own dead in a back-cellar as we do here.

'At one side of the door was an aperture; in front of which, and in order to close it, was placed a thing like an elongated drum or churn,—in fact a long tub with part of

the side cut out; it moved round on a pivot; a nun always sat on the enclosed side of the cylinder, which was called La Tour. All comestibles required for the inmates were placed by the vendors in the churn, which turned round, displaying its contents to the nun, who accepted the purchase or not, as she chose, and returned the money by another twist of the churn. Of course it was monarchical government, as here and in all convents, under the absolute control of the Lady Abbess, who was a much more powerful and mighty personage in her dominions than your Queen in her realm of Great Britain, with this exception, that our Lady Abbess could be deposed by her subjects every seven years, and a new sovereign with the same power elected: but this was rarely the case; for the most powerful character, in the course of events, inevitably rose to the top, took the reins, and kept them.

'The Lady Abbess of the Carthusians was a tall, majestic, grand-looking creature, of whom the whole population stood much in awe and reverence. There is not a crowned head in Europe at the present time that looks half the queen she did, or so thoroughly reigns over the minds of her subjects. The dress too was elegant and imposing; of black cloth, whose ample folds swept the ground in a demi-train, long flowing sleeves, a purple girdle, from which hung the black oak chaplet, mounted in silver—(they would be horrified,' said Thierna, laughing, 'to see mine with a corkscrew attached to it);—the spotless white guimpe, coming round the neck and face; and a long black veil, of very fine tissue, falling from the head down to the ground. No parure of diamonds, flowers, satin and lace, ever had a more imposing appearance than this simple dignified costume.

'The floors and wainscoating were polished oak; and as the Lady Abbess swept by in stately majesty, every eye was lowered and every head bowed. To us she was a sort of mystic *deésse*, beyond whom we knew no higher power; not that there remained on record any of her superior wisdom, but she was the head, and reigned absolute; her will was law, and her decision without appeal. The secret of her power was not in might but in mystery; she was rarely seen but upon state occasions, was spoken of with the utmost reverence and veneration; she was believed to be infallible; and she ruled not through the reason, but the faith of her subjects. I believe,' continued Thierna, 'that in the human heart there is a secret propensity to deify terrestrial objects. The Egyptians deified cats. The Mahomedans consider the person of the Sultan as half celestial, half human; he is too sacred to be touched

by human fingers, his Chamberlains may not touch him; and, in truth, his garments appear as though they had been put on with tongs.

END OF PART I.

The SECOND PART will be published in the course of June.

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